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TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

A critical discourse analysis of teacher-student relationships in a third-grade literacy lesson: Dynamics of microaggression

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Abstract: This study focuses on a recording from a week of third-grade classroom sessions. The recording was used to train new teachers in a certification program and provided data for a learning community that was studying classroom discourse. The third-grade teacher was described as being "outstanding" and "culturally responsive" by the university professor who had been using the recording to train teacher candidates. The teacher was indeed innovative in supporting cultural diversity and was responsive to all students throughout the week, except during a particular literacy lesson, the subject of this study. Critical discourse analysis revealed prioritizing White males, disrespecting a Mexican-American boy and neglecting females. The recording was later withdrawn from the certification program because it did not reflect exemplary teaching, yet its initial use points to an urgent educational problem: even experienced teachers exhibit microaggressions toward students of color and female students, and experts in teacher education do not readily recognize them when they occur. Microaggressions can appear subtle and inconsequential, yet they have a negative impact on the teacher–student relationship.

Subjects: Childhood and Adolescence; Race Education; Teacher Education & Training; Development Studies; Gender & Development; Population & Development; Culture & Development; Equality & Human Rights; Classroom, Management & Organisation; Child Development

Keywords: microaggressions; teacher–student relationship; teacher preference; gender; race and ethnicity

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Most of us have fond memories of teachers who were kind and supportive. They made us feel valued and learning was fun. And, some of us painfully remember a teacher who was unkind and made us feel unvalued and disengaged. This study explores the communication dynamics between a third-grade teacher and her students, and it describes how some students experienced privilege while others were disrespected or ignored by the teacher. Known as microaggressions, acts of disrespect and neglect can explain why some students fail to thrive at school. Earlier research has shown that disrespectful behavior that remains unresolved poses a barrier for building healthy relationships; this study indicates a similar dynamic for teacher-student relationships. By recognizing how microaggressions occur, teachers can potentially avoid them and know what to do when they occur.

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I participated in a semester-long weekly learning community focused on discourse analysis, facilitated by a university professor who specialized in classroom discourse analysis, ethnography, and teacher certification. Although each of the five participants had their own goals for attending the group, a common goal was to assist the university professor, Professor Jones, in analyzing a set of five recordings of a third-grade classroom that she recorded over the span of a week in 2009. Professor Jones had been using the recordings in a teacher certification program to model effective practices for teacher candidates, and she was doing ethnographic research in the third-grade classroom. Aside from being granted permission to use the recordings for the teacher certification program, Professor Jones had permission to also use them for research purposes by the learning community. The learning community operated with several expectations. First, each member transcribed one of the day-long classroom sessions, using their own system to represent activities, spoken words, and whatever communicative features they deemed relevant. Next, each member shared a copy of their transcripts with the other group members and over the next 11 weeks we discussed our interpretations together. Numerous topics surfaced in our discussions, such as classroom culture, culturally sensitive practices, teacher–student relationships, and potential projects that could come from our collaborative research. A core finding from the data was that the third-grade teacher, Ms Smith, was "an outstanding model of teaching" and "culturally responsive to students," as Professor Jones described her. There was plenty of evidence to support this interpretation as described later in this article. By the 11th week, our focus on the recordings narrowed to a particular literacy activity that appeared to be an anomaly in Ms Smith's teaching approach. We wondered why she yelled at one of the children, reprimanding him for touching a vocabulary card that was required for a group activity, yet she did not reprimand another boy who held the same card even after being repeatedly told to not do so. We also wondered why Ms Smith gave the vocabulary cards only to boys and not to any of the girls. Were these dynamics intentionally pedagogical as part of the learning experience or examples of microaggression? These questions inspired a closer examination of the data for answers. The learning community chose to invite Ms Smith to discuss the dynamics, but Professor Jones rejected the idea because it would potentially make her "emotionally uncomfortable," violating research ethics guidelines. Still wondering about the dynamics and the unresolved questions about Ms Smith's practice, and suspecting microaggression, I was granted permission to use the data on the condition that pseudonyms would be used to preserve privacy and prevent embarrassment.

The goal of this study was not about embarrassing Ms Smith; it is an attempt to understand why a well-intended teacher behaved as she did during a literacy lesson. Applying discourse analysis might reveal how microaggressions operate in the classroom so they can be more readily visible and be avoided. Microanalysis of the social organization of this single event could provide clues on how unintentional disrespect (yelling at a student) and preferential treatment (allowing only boys to have the vocabulary card) are constructed in teacher–student relationships. This kind of information could potentially lead to insight on how to recognize classroom microaggressions and avoid them, and on what to do when they happen.

Two research questions guided this study: Do the dynamics in the literacy lesson reflect microaggression? In what ways did Ms Smith strengthen or weaken teacher–student relations?

2. Microaggressions

Microaggressions are "the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership" (Sue, 2010a, p. 3). Usually, they are subtle messages that demean individuals on a personal level and group level, relegating them to an inferior status and treatment, and they are delivered by "well-intended individuals who are unaware that they have engaged in harmful conduct toward a socially devalued group" (p. 3). While these slights might appear to be harmless ordinary activities, they can have a profound effect on receivers of these messages at the physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral level, as summarized by Sue (2010b) from numerous studies since the 1960s.

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Microaggressions are not just about being disrespectful toward an individual. They devalue entire groups and are accomplished in three ways: *microassaults*, *microinsults*, and *microinvalidations* (Sue, 2010a, 2010b). Perpetrators of microassaults consciously harbor bias toward an individual and their socially devalued group, and they express it publicly though acts of racism, sexism, homophobia, or other forms of discrimination. Examples include bullying, physical violence, and hate speech. Perpetrators of microinsults are not consciously aware of their bias toward individuals of a socially devalued group and do not interpret their messages as being insulting or demeaning. Microinsults are usually subtle slights that appear to be ordinary activities. For example, a female student who earned a high score in math is told by her teacher, "Wow, you did as well as the boys." On a conscious level, the teacher seemed to be complimenting the student, but at a deeper level, implied that girls do not usually have skills equivalent to boys. Microinvalidations are also usually unconscious and are communicated through cues that exclude, ignore, or nullify a person's feelings, beliefs, statements, or experiences. For example, slogans like "All Lives Matter" began to appear shortly after the "Black Lives Matter" movement appeared. Those professing that "All Lives Matter" do not seem to understand that "Black Lives Matter" is a response to violence against a targeted group. By widening the scope of concerns to "all" groups, they invalidate the concerns about injustice toward Black Americans. This kind of invalidation resembles statements from those who claim to be color-blind when interacting with others, as though they lived in a society without racial conflict.

Any form of disrespect is the main cause of weakened or failed relationships, according to Thomas Scheff. Through his research on relationships (Scheff, 1990, 1994, 1997; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991), he noted three possible sequences in the interactional dynamics, represented in Figure 1. In the ideal sequence, there is mutual respect from each party and no perceived interpersonal problem. In this case, each feels emotionally connected and behaves cooperatively, and the relationship remains secure. In another possible sequence, either party perceives some form of disrespect, causing the relational bond to become challenged. If the offender acknowledges the offense and makes earnest attempts to repair the damage, and if the offended party accepts the reconciliation efforts, the relational bond can be restored. A third possible outcome is when the offender does not acknowledge

Figure 1. Three possible interactional sequences and their outcomes: (1) respectful communication results in a continued secure bond, (2) microaggression leads to an insecure bond, but if acknowledged and repaired, a secure bond can continue, and (3) microaggression leads to an insecure bond, and if not acknowledged or repaired, the relationship is damaged.
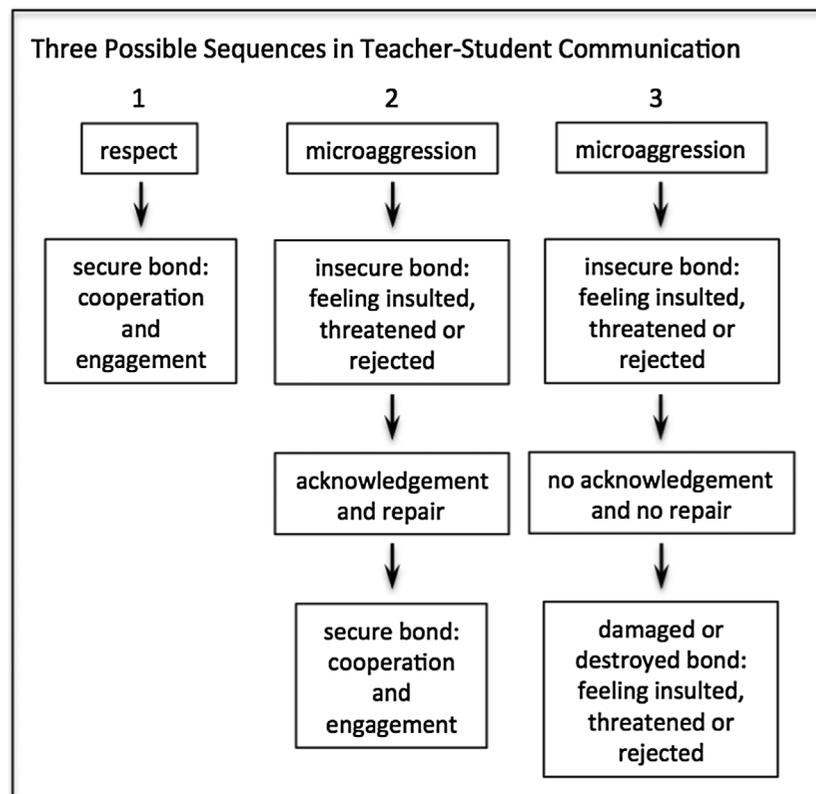
the offense or make efforts to correct the situation. In this case, the relationship remains severely damaged or permanently destroyed, leaving the offended person feeling insulted, devalued, threatened, rejected, and shamed. The basis of Scheff's theory of emotions is that shame is a dominant emotion that can easily be triggered by an intended or unintended offense. It is the "master emotion" that deflates our sense of comfort with others (Scheff, 1994, pp. 53–54).

Scheff's theory of emotions and his model of interactional sequences have important implications for third-grade teacher–student relationships, as illustrated in Figure 1. A teacher's respectful communication reinforces a positive teacher–student relationship. At the behavioral level, that student is more likely to be cooperative and stay engaged, and at the emotional level, feel secure in the relationship. Even when discipline is required, it can be applied in a respectful way, a dynamic that Goffman (1967) described as *saving face*. (As a reminder, discipline is about teaching, not punishing.)

If the student perceives a microaggression from the teacher, the relationship will become insecure, potentially leading to a damaged or destroyed bond. As illustrated in the second sequence of Figure 1, at this juncture the microaggression must be acknowledged before it can be repaired. Unfortunately, some young children are not linguistically skilled enough to protest over a teacher's microaggression or they have not been socialized to do so. Assuming that the child did protest, verbally or nonverbally, the teacher would next need to acknowledge the damage that was done and repair it before the relationship could be restored. An example of an interactional acknowledgment would be accepting responsibility for one's own behavior, and a repair would be an apology that expresses regret, making restitution, expressing genuine repentance, and requesting forgiveness (Chapman & Thomas, 2006). If the teacher's repair is credible and accepted, the teacher–student relationship has potential to be secure again.

The third sequence in Figure 1 reflects an unresolved microaggression: after the offense, the teacher offers no acknowledgment or makes no effort to repair the bond, even if the student protests verbally or nonverbally. Without the repair, the student remains feeling insulted, devalued, threatened, or rejected—feelings that Scheff collectively regards as shame and what Goffman (1967) called "alienation from interaction."

2.1. Studies on the teacher–student relationship

A popular view of educational outcomes is that students who perform poorly at school share the responsibility of failure with their parents. This kind of deficit model, however, does not take into account that teachers co-construct academic success or failure through their relationship with students. Consider the following studies that support this notion. Research by Cornelius-White (2007), drawing from a synthesis of 119 studies from 1948 to 2004 involving 355,325 students suggested that positive relationships with teachers produce favorable learning outcomes. In his analysis of variables that were associated with student outcomes, affective variables such as "empathy" and "warmth" were more strongly associated with positive outcomes than other person-centered variables. Pianta, la Paro, Payne, Cox, and Bradley (2002) also found that a positive relationship with teachers generated more favorable outcomes. And, Suldo, McMahan, Chappel, and Bateman (2014) found that students' satisfaction with the teacher–student relationship was correlated with adaptive academic achievement, increased grade point averages, fewer disciplinary referrals, and greater appreciation for school. In a longitudinal study of 179 children from kindergarten to eighth grade, Hamre and Pianta (2001) found that negative teacher–student relationships were a strong predictor of disciplinary problems with boys and suspension from school. Research by Lee and Burkam (2003) also showed that students are less likely to drop out from schools that were recognized for positive teacher–student relations than schools with negative relationships.

Positive teacher–students relationships are also associated with greater student engagement. Klem and Connell (2004) found that middle school students who experienced high levels of support from their teacher were 47% more likely to be engaged with lessons, and those who got low support

were 68% more likely to be disengaged. Garcia-Reid, Reid, and Peterson (2005) also found that strong social support from teachers and positive relationships resulted in improved school engagement.

Positive teacher–student relationships can also predict academic achievement for children with developmental vulnerabilities. For example, although teacher–student relationships are important for all students, Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, and Oort (2011) found that children with learning difficulties or are economically disadvantaged valued the teacher's relationship most. In a similar study, Baker (2006) found that students who had a close relationship with their teachers were "significantly advantaged relative to similarly affected peers who lacked such relationships" (p. 211).

Teaching is an interactive process that involves imparting skills, presenting subject content and theoretical concepts, promoting intellectual, physical, psychological, social and emotional development, and requires positive teacher–student relationships. It is not a disengaged activity and it requires social consciousness to support all students, especially the vulnerable, not just a select group.

2.2. Studies on ethnic/cultural disparities in the classroom

The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) continues to present data on outcome differences in reading and math among the racial groups in the US, and contrasting differences in school dropout rates. These data show where educational disparities continue to exist and for whom, and we can surmise that impoverished communities fare worse, usually underrepresented minority communities. We know that poor school districts get less funding compared to communities with a wealthier tax base (Heuer & Stullich, 2011), and that many low-performing districts have teachers that do not reflect the local racial demographics (Delpit, 1995; Dilworth & Coleman, 2014) or stay long in historically underserved districts (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013), and these are factors that contribute to the educational disparities. However, we also know that healthy teacher–student relations can mitigate problems in educational achievement and poor relations contribute to poor achievement as the aforementioned studies have shown. Other studies suggest that students of color are especially at risk of experiencing poor relations with their teachers, resulting in poor educational outcomes. Consider the following studies that support this notion. Luna and Tijerina Revilla (2013) interviewed Latina/o dropouts and concluded that the most salient reasons for dropping out was associated with discrimination and racial microaggression by teachers and school personnel. Latina/o students in the study "generally believed that teachers, administrators, and school personnel gave preferential treatment to Whites and Blacks and that they were treated negatively based on their ethnicity" (p. 29). Black students also view their teachers as being racially biased. An ethnographic study by Rosenfeld (1983), based in the Harlem community of New York city, found that Black students reported teachers as being hostile toward them and that the schooling experience was damaging to their development. Hope, Skoog, and Jagers (2014) also found that Black high school students experienced racial stereotyping and discrimination from teachers and school personnel. A search on YouTube using "racist teacher" as a search phrase reveals more evidence that teachers and school staff treat students of color poorly, resulting in damaged relationships. One might argue that these kinds of evidence (student interviews and YouTube video accounts) are merely anecdotal, however, even stringent experimental methods have shown that teachers are racially biased and discriminatory toward students of color. For example, Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) asked teachers from a variety of racial demographics to recommend disciplinary action for hypothetical scenarios of students who violated school rules. The details that were provided about each violation were the same for two targeted groups, Black and White students, yet suspension rates were recommended significantly higher for the Black students, regardless of the teachers' own racial/ethnic identity, pointing to racial disparities in disciplinary action and preferential treatment of Whites. In their six-year study that tracked nearly 1 million school children, researchers found that Black children were 31% more likely than other children to be punished for similar violations (Fabelo et al., 2011). One question that drove the present study is: Did Ms Smith discipline children differently and, if so, how so? One goal in this study was to map how the teacher disciplined students for violating rules and how students responded to it.

Numerous studies have shown that teachers' cultural insensitivity, that is, a lack of knowledge on ways to promote positive classroom interactions among diverse individuals, contributes to poor student engagement and hampers their success (e.g. Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Carroll, 2012; Gehlbach, Brinkworth, & Harris, 2012; Hallinan, 2008; Huebner & Gilman, 2006; Hughes, 2012; Katz, 1999; Maximo & Robertson, 1998; Philips, 1983; Pryor Deshon, 1997; Tettagah, 1996; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wayman, 2002; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). Even in studies that found mostly positive dynamics between teachers and students of color, results suggested that some teachers lowered their expectations for students of color, unintentionally undermining their success (Harber, 1998; Harber, Gorman, Gengaro, Butisingh, & Tsang, 2012). Other studies found that some students of color sensed that White teachers held unfavorable and inaccurate impressions of their academic skills (Coleman, Jussim, & Isaac, 1991; Philips, 1983) and the "cultural conflict" between them made learning difficult (Milner, 2010, 2012). In a society that continues to grow in diversity, studies are needed to explore how groups are treated differently in education and critically examine exemplary models that are used in teacher certification programs.

2.3. Disparity studies on gender in the classroom

Research has shown that teachers treat male and female students unequally. They respond to and call on males more frequently than females (Hillman & Davenport, 1978; Hutchinson & Beadle, 1992; Karp & Yoels, 1976). Males also get more praise from teachers (Sadker and Sadker (1984). They are more disruptive in classrooms and receive more of the teacher's attention (Lockeed and Harris (1984), and teachers are more lax toward their misbehavior (Arnold, McWilliams, & Arnold, 1998). Teachers also allow males to dominate classroom talk (Alvermann, Dillon, & O'Brien, 1987; Lemke, 1990), they pose more higher order questions to them than females (Becker, 1981; Good, Sikes, & Brophy, 1973; Sadker & Sadker, 1995), they elaborate more on answers given by them (Jones & Wheatley, 1990), give them less critical praise (Liu, 2006), and initiate more interactions with them (Jones & Dindia, 2004). And, regardless of the teacher's gender, they are more accepting of male dominance in the classroom (Sadker & Sadker, 1995), they spend 43% more time addressing them over basic content, 28% more time on elaborating for them, and 102% more time in managing their behavior (Schumow & Schmidt, 2013). Research has also shown that teachers, regardless of their gender, report more conflictive relationships with boys than girls (Spilt, Koomen, & Jak, 2011), and even student peers rate boys as being more conflictive (Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson, 1999; Hughes, Cavell, & Willson, 2001).

Since the 1970s, the National Center for Educational Statistics has been reporting that males are more proficient than females in math and females are more proficient in reading, based on the ongoing assessments from National Assessment of Educational Progress (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013), yet Konishi, Hymel, Zumbo, and Li (2010) have shown that the performance gap might be grounded in the teacher–student relationship. They found that 15-year-old students who experienced a positive relationship with their teachers demonstrated higher academic achievement in both math and reading, and this was evident for both males and females. In an earlier study, Lee and Loeb (2000) found that interactional support from teachers is strongly related to one-year gains in both reading and math. We might surmise that performance differences in math and reading are partly the result of how teachers communicate with students, not innate student capabilities or weaknesses.

One goal of this study was to map how girls and boys were treated differently during a literacy lesson. Without assuming any malicious intent on Ms Smith's part, what actions led to her giving boys control of vocabulary cards and bypassing the girls? Was this an example of microinvalidation or can discourse analysis reveal other explanations?

3. Methodology

Data for this study were collected from a week-long set of audio–video recordings of a third-grade classroom in a suburban city in Southern California during 2009, ethnographic field notes, and group discussions from a learning community. An experienced ethnographer, Professor Jones, who also specialized in classroom discourse analysis, recorded the five day-long sessions. A camera was

placed in each of the four corners in the classroom, elevated near the ceiling and pointed downward so the activities of the teacher and the students could be captured from multiple angles. A microphone was attached to each camera so the classroom sounds could also be captured. Transcripts were developed for each of the five classroom sessions by a learning community. A segment from one of those sessions, a literacy lesson, was the primary focus of this study because a particular event raised questions about what happened. A main source of analysis was from multiple viewings of the classroom interaction (from the four recorded angles), detailed transcripts of the activities, including the verbal and nonverbal communication, Professor Jones' ethnographic notes, and discussions among discourse analysts in a learning community. These learning community discussions were recorded over an online video conferencing system that accommodated desktop screenings of the third-grade classroom interactions and their corresponding transcripts, plus sharing written notes embedded by group members.

3.1. The classroom

The third-grade classroom in this study was situated in a Southern California city with a population of about 30,000: about 69% White, 9% Asian, 2% African-American, and less than 1% American-Indian and Pacific Islander. Hispanics or Latinos of any race accounted for 33% of the population. An annual report from the school associated with the third-grade classroom showed about 300 students with the following demographics: 72% Hispanic or Latino, 23% White, 1.5% Black or African-American, 2.5% Asian, and less than 1% of all other groups. About 66% were classified as "socioeconomically disadvantaged" and 60% were "English learners." Ms Smith's classroom had 20 third-grade students seated at 5 grouped desks with 4 per group. Each group was purposefully configured by Ms Smith to reflect a balanced seating arrangement by gender, racial/ethnic diversity, and English-language learners. A list of students in each group, Table 1, was provided by Ms Smith through Professor Jones, which includes demographic information: gender, English-language learner, ethnicity, seat location. One student (#18) was absent for the literacy lesson in this study.

Table 1. Seating arrangement for the five student groups					
	Pseudonym	**Seat number**	**Race/ethnicity**	**Gender**	**ESL**
Group 1	Ricky	1	Hispanic/Latino	Male	Y
	Geoff	2	White	Male	N
	Katie	3	Hispanic/Latino	Female	N
	Debbie	4	Black or African American	Female	N
Group 2	Juan	5	Hispanic/Latino	Male	Y
	Mark	6	White	Male	N
	Maria	7	Hispanic/Latino	Female	Y
	Kristen	8	Hispanic/Latino	Female	N
Group 3	Angelica	9	Hispanic/Latino	Female	Y
	Zach	10	White	Male	N
	Christian	11	Hispanic/Latino	Male	Y
	Nichole	12	Hispanic/Latino	Female	N
Group 4	Chloe	13	Hispanic/Latino	Female	Y
	Miranda	14	Hispanic/Latino	Female	Y
	Chuck	15	White	Male	N
	Kimberly	16	Asian	Female	N
Group 5	Rosa	17	Hispanic/Latino	Female	Y
	Rafael	18	Hispanic/Latino	Female	Y
	Connie	19	Hispanic/Latino	Male	Y
	Andrew	20	White	Male	N

The classroom was decorated with numerous posters that highlighted cultural diversity, such as children from various backgrounds playing together. Vocabulary posters in English and Spanish featured images of animals, fruits, vegetables, and other objects. Stickers were placed on objects in to identify them in Spanish and English spelling. One wall featured a weekly "hero" that highlighted diverse populations, such Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, Harriet Tubman, Abraham Lincoln, Florence Nightingale, Abraham Lincoln, and Mahatma Gandhi, to name a few. There were also posted quotes that promoted social equity and collaboration, such as the following example: "Equal is everyone getting the same thing. Fair is everyone getting what they need in order to be successful."

3.2. The teacher, Ms Smith

At the time of the classroom recording sessions, Ms Smith was a White 46-year-old teacher with certification from a major university and with over 20 years of multiple-subject teaching experience in elementary school education. She had been with the current school district for almost 12 years, was awarded "teacher of year," and served as a lead teacher for six years. She was currently learning Spanish as a second language and frequently used Spanish translations for lessons. Ms Smith volunteered to have her classroom studied by Professor Jones for the purpose of developing training materials for a teacher certification program and to provide data for a learning community interested in classroom discourse analysis.

3.3. Professor Jones

Professionally recognized for classroom ethnography and discourse analysis, Professor Jones taught doctoral students and teacher certification candidates at a public university in California. She observed Ms Smith about once a week for several months, taking notes and conducting interviews with her. Working with research assistants, she set up recording equipment in Ms Smith's classroom and recorded five full days of interaction during a week in 2009. Over the next two years, Professor Jones incorporated some of the recordings in courses for the teacher certification program, including the literacy lesson that is the focus of this study.

In 2011, Professor Jones invited scholars to participate in a learning community focused on culturally responsive teaching and classroom discourse analysis. She facilitated discussions with an online conferencing system that allowed each of the five members to see and hear each other, exchange notes, and view a common desktop. Digital recordings of the classroom sessions and field notes were provided to each member on compact disk.

3.4. The learning community group

The learning community was composed of scholars from across the United States, individuals who were interested in culturally responsive teaching and classroom discourse analysis. Each of the five invited members had a doctoral degree and experience in discourse analysis, and each was a fluent speaker of English, the main language spoken in the third-grade classroom. Academic disciplines included: education, sociology, and anthropology. Each member transcribed one of the five full-day sessions within two weeks and for the next 16, the group watched the classroom recordings, studied the transcripts and field notes together, and discussed their observations and interpretations.

While transcribing, my attention was drawn to a particular moment when Ms Smith's voice was unusually loud and reprimanding toward one of the children, Juan: "*I told you not to touch that card.*" I was curious to know why Ms Smith was angry, what the boy had done to merit the loud discipline, and why he slumped in his chair and was silent for the rest of the lesson, appearing to be ashamed. These were the initial questions that motivated this study. In what first appeared to be innocent preparation for a literacy lesson, critical discourse analysis revealed some disturbing dynamics, so I solicited help from the learning community to crosscheck my interpretations.

3.5. Transcription methods and analysis

A transcript of the literacy lesson was constructed to capture the moment-by-moment activity. As in many traditions of discourse analysis (Brown & Yule, 1983; Gee, 2014; Ochs, 1979; Retzinger, 1991,

1995; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1978; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991), the notation system was designed to capture spoken words and the nonverbal behavioral cues of the participants. My goal with the transcription method was to capture contextually relevant information, such as spoken words and nonverbal cues that reveal the teacher–student relationships, focusing mainly on the teacher's movement in the classroom in relation to the students.

Because one hypothesis about the dynamics in the literacy lesson was about microaggression and differential treatment of students, critical discourse analysis was applied to explore implications for political issues, such as "status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods, and power" (Gee, 2014, p. 87). In his theory of discourse, Gee argued that language is constructed along "seven building tasks" or "seven areas of reality" and proposed a main "discourse analysis question" for studying each task (pp. 32–35). The first task is about the *significance* of a thing (such as an object, person, concept, or phenomenon). Language renders something significant or less significant to signal to others how we view its significance. The question associated with how to study significance is: How is this piece of language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways? The second task is a focus on *practices* and/or activities. A practice is a social, institutionally and culturally supported endeavor that is accomplished by combining actions or activities. The question associated with exploring practice is: What practice (activity) or practices (activities) does this piece of language enact (i.e. get others to recognize what is going on)? The third building task is about the use of language to be recognized in a certain *identity* or role, and the corresponding question is: What identity or identities does this piece of language enact (i.e. to get others to recognize as operative) what is it attributing to others, and how does it help the speaker or writer communicate his/her own identity? The forth is a focus on how language signals the kind of *relationship* we have, want to have, and try to have with the listener (or reader), or with other people about whom we are communicating. The main question for studying relationship is: What sort of relationship or relationships is this piece of language seeking to enact with others (present or not)? *Politics*, the fifth building task, is a focus on social goods and the guiding question is: What perspective on social goods is the piece of language communicating (i.e. normal, correct, right, good, proper, appropriate, valuable, the way things are, the way things ought to be, high or low status, like or dislike)? The sixth, *connection*, is about whether the language renders certain things connected or not, relevant or not, to other things. The question: How does this piece of language connect or disconnect to things and how does it make one thing relevant or irrelevant to another? The last one, *sign systems and knowledge*, is about how we use language to privilege or disprivilege different languages (e.g. Spanish, English, slang, colloquial) or sign systems (graphs, images): How does this piece of language privilege or disprivilege specific sign systems or different ways of knowing and believing or claims to knowledge and belief?

One problem in discourse analysis is validity of analysis. For this study, I applied Gee's system for increasing validity by analyzing the data in relation to the aforementioned questions. Analysis is more valid if the answers to the questions (the aforementioned task questions and research questions) *converge* in the way they support the analysis. In other words, the more compatible the answers become in relation to each other, the more valid the analysis becomes. Validity can also be increased if other discourse analysts or other sorts of researchers (e.g. ethnographic researchers) agree with the analytic conclusions from the aforementioned questions. For this study, a learning community analyzed the recorded third-grade session together, along with the field notes provided by Professor Jones, an ethnographer who observed the classroom for several months. Discussions oriented around Gee's task building questions also fortified the analysis.

Another way to increase validity in discourse analysis relates to coverage in how the analysis can be applied to related sorts of data, including what happened before and after the activities being studied, plus predicting what might happen in related situations. According to Scheff (1997), another way to increase coverage in analysis is to compare what actually happened to what could have (or should have) happened instead, a hypothetical scenario that would have been more face-saving. For this study, analysis included the moment-by-moment activities that happened during the literacy event, plus the other activities that were recorded over the span of a week.

Validity is also increased when the conclusions of analysis are tightly related to the details of linguistic structure. Assuming that a speaker's form of language is structured to accomplish a specific function, discourse analysts must be able to argue that the function (or outcome) is linked to grammatical devices (or strategies) that serve the function. One goal for this study was to explore how microaggressions manifested in a teacher's communicative strategies (or design) and the responses from students.

The verbal and nonverbal cues expressed during the literacy lesson were also subjected to Scheff's discourse analytic system for clues on the quality of the teacher–student relationship. Drawing from their own empirical research and the works of others in the sociology of emotions field (Paul Eckman, Erving Goffman, Helen Lewis), Scheff and Retzinger identified verbal and nonverbal cues of anger and shame, reflecting signs of relational attunement and isolation (Retzinger, 1991, 1995; Scheff, 1990; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991). Their analytic system is for identifying the significance of spoken words and the accompanying vocal tone (e.g. pitch, loudness, pace, and tone), facial expressions and other forms of body language. A main strategy for understanding the meaning of an event, according to Scheff (1997), is to micro-analyze a single specimen, compare it to similar specimens, compare it to different types of specimens, and generate grounded micro–macro theory.

3.6. The literacy lesson transcript

As the classroom session began, Ms Smith was at the entrance and greeted students with warm smiles and laughter. Students chatted and laughed among themselves as they arrived, placed their belongings in the closet and at their desks, and seated themselves. As the students continued to chat, Ms Smith walked to the front of her desk, depicted as position *A* in Figure 2, the classroom diagram, and said:

Figure 2. Classroom diagram of teacher's movement along the A–I trajectories, and students seated at numbered desks by group.
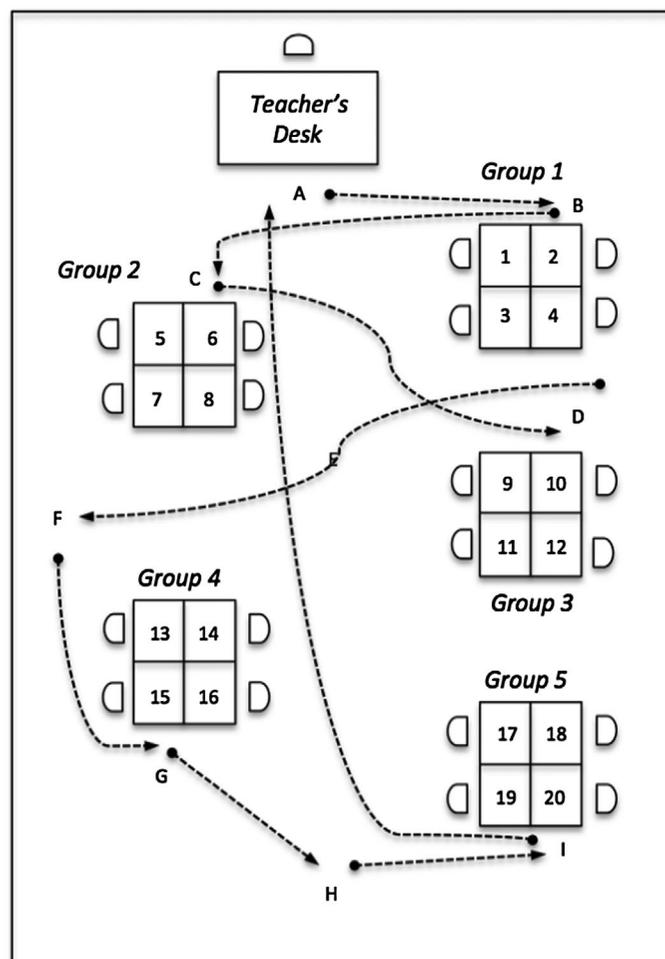
01   Okay, everyone settle down Please take your seats I've got a special assignment for you today You're going to love it It's so cool Hurry up and sit down.

As she spoke, she looked around the room at the students while smiling, waived her hand in the air to get their attention, and held vocabulary cards in the other hand. Most of the students continued to talk and were still in the process of putting belongings away or taking out writing tools. After another brief moment, Ms Smith spoke louder while looking around the room.

02   Please hurry. Get your pencils out and a piece of paper and settle down. Settle down. Quiet. Settle down. Please get ready.

She paused briefly between each phrase and became louder on "quiet," drowning the students' chattering as they continued to settle in their seats. She paused longer as the room became quieter and she had a stern expression on her face.

03   Okay good. All right. Let me have your attention. Now. We're now going to…

She stopped mid-sentence, looking at Mark, who was in seat #6 (Figure 2) and was talking to Jennifer (seat #8). She continued, still looking at Mark:

04   Let me have your attention. Please.

Her voice became louder on "*please*" and Mark and other students became quiet and looked at her. Ms Smith then walked from the front of her desk to Geoff's desk, seat #2. This trajectory is represented in Figure 2, from position *A* to position *B*. As she walked, she said:

05   Okay, now we're going to work in our groups for the next 15 min. Please settle down everyone. Come on. Please.

Ms Smith placed a folded card in front of Geoff. It was folded in half as an A-frame shape so it stood upright on the desk with two visible sides. A word was written on only one side of the card, and it was placed facing Geoff so it was visible only to him. Geoff picked it up to examine it closely and placed it back in the same location. Debbie, who was next to Geoff, leaned toward him to read the card then sat back in her chair. Ricky and Katie, who are were across from them, shuffled forward in their seats, attempting to see the card. Geoff picked up the card again, showed them the word and placed it back on his desk. While these activities were happening at this group of students, Ms Smith walked to the second group and placed a folded card in front of Mark, who was at seat #6. Her movement is represented as the *B–C* trajectory in Figure 2. The card was placed so only Mark could read the word. Ms Smith continued:

06   I'm giving you a word that I want you to think about.

Kristen, seated near Mark, leaned toward him to see the card as Ms Smith moved to the next group of students, represented as the *C–D* trajectory in Figure 2. Mark picked up the card, raised it toward his face to read it and placed it back in the original position, facing himself. Juan (seat #5) and Maria (seat #7) shifted in their chairs to see the word on the card but could not see it and Mark did not offer to show it. Meanwhile, Ms Smith walked to the next table and placed a card on Zach's desk, facing him, who was in seat #10. Next, she turned around with her back at the wall, depicted as location *D* in Figure 2, standing side-by-side with Debbie. She looked at Mark, seat #6, who had just picked up the card a second time, and said to him:

07   Please don't touch the card on your table.

While looking at Ms Smith, Mark continued to hold the card briefly, and then tapped it on his desk three times as Ms Smith watched him do so. He continued to hold the card as Ms Smith walked past him toward the fourth group (shown as the *D–E* trajectory in Figure 2). As she passed, he asked her:

08   What's it for?

Ms Smith continued toward the forth group, turned toward Mark as she reached position *E* depicted on Figure 2. From that spot, she looked at him while walking sideways and backwards to position *F*. As she moved, she addressed him again:

09   Not yet.

While stationary in position *F*, Ms Smith continued to look directly at Mark while he continued to hold the card, which was now a few inches from the surface of his desk. She repeated her command as second time in a low tone while moving away from him:

10   Don't touch the card for now.

Mark placed the card back on the desk but continued to hold it with his thumb and index finger, not fully complying with her command. Ms Smith made eye contact with the card again, noticed that Mark had not released it as instructed, yet she turned her gaze from him and moved from position *F* to the next group. Ms Smith's movement is represented as the *F–G* trajectory in Figure 2. At seat #15, she placed a card in front of Chuck, facing him, and said:

11   Here you go.

From there, she moved to the *H* position where she turned to face the class. This is represented as the *G–H* trajectory on the diagram. From that position, she spoke to the entire class:

12   Okay, I want you to think about what the word means to you and discuss it at your table.

Next, she moved to Andrew's desk, seat #20 in the next group, and this is represented as the *H–I* trajectory in the diagram. She placed the card directly in front of Andrew, facing him. He lifted the card, showed the word to his peers and placed it back on his desk. Standing by Andrew in position *I*, Ms Smith said:

13   What does the word mean? What does it make you think about? How might you use it in a sentence? Okay?

She then moved slowly across the room from position *I* to the front of the room, point *A*, while saying:

14   Now, in a moment, you're going to work cooperatively in your group to share ideas about the word and…

At this point, several of the students were talking to each other in a low voice; most comments were inaudible. Students who were seated at two of the groups on the right side of the classroom passed the card around to examine the word. At the other groups, the card remained where Ms Smith originally positioned it, and Mark still had the card in his fingers. As Ms Smith walked along the *I–A* trajectory, Mark (seat #6) interrupted her again as she approached him:

15   But, what is it?

She observed that Mark still had the card in his hand, walked past him and answered in a low tone:

16   I'll explain that shortly.

Next, standing in front of the classroom again in position *A* and facing the students, she said:

17   You're going to work in your group to talk about the word that's on your card. (pause) And, you're going to write down what the word means. (pause) And then, you're going to give an example of how to use that word in a sentence. (pause) Okay, you understand? Got it? Everyone got your papers and pencils? Come on, get them out.

As Ms Smith gave instructions, Juan, who was seated across from Mark in seat #5, appeared confused. He had not seen the word yet and was now shifting left and right in his chair, gesticulating toward Mark to see it. At this point, Mark had not shown Juan the word or to the adjacent student, Maria, who was in seat #7. Juan shifted back and forth quickly on the edge of his chair with an arched back, leaning forward with a confused expression on his face (knitted eyebrows, squinting), and he looked at Mark and Ms Smith several times. Mark looked directly at Juan briefly but did not respond to his nonverbal request to see the vocabulary word. Ms Smith briefly made eye contact with Juan twice but did not address him directly. Addressing the whole class, she next said:

18   Any questions?

Juan remained silent and did not respond to Ms Smith's question and he continued to shift left and right in his chair, now leaning more forward and looking more confused. Ms Smith repeated the instructions, first in English then Spanish:

19   So, first talk about the word. Then, you're going to write a definition for the word on your paper. Then, after you do those two things, you're going to write a sentence using that word. Right? So, that's three things you're going to have to do.

20   Atención. En primer, hablar de la palabra. Después, escribe la definición de su papel. Más tarde, utilice la palabra en una oración. ¿Bueno?

Juan continued to look confused and leaned further across his desk toward the vocabulary card, almost standing. Ms Smith briefly looked at him, then looked around the room and said:

21   Now you only have 15 min so please work quickly. All right? You understand?

Juan leaned across his desk, pointed at the card while looking at Ms Smith with a confused face. She looked at him but did not respond. After Mark released the card, Juan reached further to make contact, and started to turn it slowly with his forefinger so he could read the vocabulary word. Ms Smith took a step toward Juan, leaned toward him, and with a loud voice said:

22   I told you not to touch that card!

She looked directly at Juan with an angry facial expression and body posture (knitted eye brows, tight lips, hands on hips, chin cocked forward) for a few seconds. Juan recoiled back into his seat, folded his arms onto his lap, and turned his face downward. Ms Smith took a step back to position *A* and asked the classroom:

23   Does everyone understand? Okay, get busy. Take a look at the card now and talk about what it means in your group. Go on.

For the next five minutes, children talked with each other. At three groups (1, 4, and 5) the card was passed around so each student had a chance to hold and read it. At group 2 and 3, Mark and Zach, who were given a card, showed theirs to everyone in their group and continued to hold it through their discussion. Almost everyone was engaged with the activity; some were talking in dyads, some spoke to the entire group, and others mostly listened. Girls and boys were equally active. As an example, Kristen began the discussion at her desk with a definition of the vocabulary word on the card:

24   Well, friendship is when you like someone and they like you right back. They're your friend and they care about you. You like hang-out together, do stuff together. It's like that. You're friends you know.

Juan, seated across from Mark continued to sulk in his seat, clasped his hands between his knees and did not speak. He looked up at Ms Smith with tight lips and knitted eyebrows. Meantime, Ms Smith returned to her desk and did not notice Juan's expression.

4. Findings

Attention was drawn to a specific utterance delivered by Ms Smith because it was unusually loud and reprimanding toward Juan, line 22: *I told you not to touch that card!* Following Gee's (2014) recommendation to look for how an utterance "connects or disconnects" to other utterances, or how it "makes one thing relevant or irrelevant to another," or how it "privileges or disprivileges" different ways of knowing and believing, the verbal and nonverbal dynamics of line 22 were compared against Ms Smith's other statements from the literacy lesson. At the onset of the literacy lesson, Ms Smith expressed warmth toward all the students, including Juan and the girls, and greeted each one personally as they entered the classroom. Other cues of her warmth appear in lines 01–05, when she asked students to take their seats and become quiet for instructions. During this part of the lesson, Ms Smith said "please" numerous times, smiled at students, and invoked excitement for the upcoming lesson ("*You're going to love it. It's cool. Hurry up and sit down*"). Starting at line 07 when she instructed students to not touch the card that she was delivering at each group, Ms Smith continued to demonstrate warmth toward students, even when Mark ignored her instructions the first time, lines 07–10, and the second time, lines 15 and 16. From lines 17–21, Ms Smith demeanor became more "directive," "task-oriented," and "business-like"—terms that several members of the learning community used to describe this sequence, when instructions were delivered in a clear and straightforward fashion. Thus far, these dynamics, lines 01–21, were "ordinary classroom activities" and "normal dialogue," as described by the learning community. What stands out of the ordinary, however, is how Ms Smith responded to students with reprimands. Note that lines 07–10, include two reprimands directed at Mark: "*Please don't touch the card on your table. Don't touch the card for now.*" She opened with "*please*," signifying respectful wording. After Mark failed to comply, she repeated the command "*Don't touch the card for now*" in a low, barely audible tone and he continued to hold the card while being noticed by her, yet there were no associated consequences for violating repeated instructions. This entire exchange took place on the D–E–F trajectory of Figure 2, moving past Mark and away from him. In contrast, Ms Smith issued the same command to Juan, but in a louder tone without the use of "please" to signal a similar level of respect given to Mark, and her body language reflected a stern demeanor toward Juan: knitted eye brows, tight lips, hands on hips, chin cocked forward, and staring directly at him for a few seconds in silence.

Analyzing the volume of Ms Smith's voice provided more evidence for how she treated students differently. At the onset of the class, her voice was somewhat loud as she attempted to get the students settled in their chairs and oriented to the task: "*Please hurry… Quiet… Let me have your attention.*" After students were settled, her volume was reduced and it remained reduced when she communicated with Mark, when he failed to comply with her requests and interrupted her. Yet later, when she reprimanded Juan, her volume was much louder: "*I told you not to touch that card!*"

Raising one's voice is an indicator of anger, disagreement and power assertion, as documented by Scheff and Retzinger (1991), and in this case, reflected the nature of Ms Smith's relationship Juan.

Another comparison can be made in how Mark and Juan responded differently to Ms Smith's reprimand. Mark ignored the first command; instead of releasing the card, he tapped it on his desk three times as Ms Smith observed. And, as she gave instructions to the whole classroom, he interrupted her as she passed by him: "*But, what is it?*" She responded "*not yet,*" signaling that she wanted to continue with instructions. After the second command, "*Don't touch the card for now*" (line 07) he placed the card on his desk but continued to hold it, not fully complying with Ms Smith's command which she noticed (line 15 and 16) without reprimanding a third time. He did not appear distressed from the dynamics. In contrast, Juan, showed signs of discomfort, beginning on line 06. He and Maria, seated across from Mark, had not seen the vocabulary word and shifted back and forth in their seat, attempting to see it. Both their faces showed signs of curiosity (raised eyebrows, upward and fast shifting in their seats). When Ms Smith returned to the front of the classroom, she asked students if they understood the instructions (lines 17 and 18). At this point, Juan had not seen the vocabulary word yet, was shifting in his chair back and forth, and looked at Mark and Ms Smith with a facial gesture that showed confusion. The learning community members interpreted Juan's behavior as a request for attention. As one member puts it, "It's obvious he's distressed and needs help." Although Ms Smith looked directly at Juan, whether or not she noticed his distress could not be confirmed. During this time, she made two open calls for students to confirm their understanding: "*Okay you understand?*" (line 17) and "*Any questions?*" (line 18). Yet, Juan did not speak. At this juncture, he could have said that he did not understand and wanted to see the vocabulary word. Why he remained silent and only signaled for help nonverbally is unclear. The learning group members had several theories about his silence: He was too shy to speak up, he did not have sufficient English-language skills or enough confidence to pose a question, and he assumed the teacher would eventually respond to his nonverbal cues. Juan's demeanor in other classroom sessions showed him to be somewhat shy; he communicated effectively in his small group but did not speak during full-classroom discussions. As an English learner, he probably did not feel confident to ask Ms Smith for help while the whole class was listening and he probably assumed that Mark would show him the vocabulary card. It is not clear why Juan did not ask Mark directly to show him the card. Philips (1983) claims that some students rely heavily on communicating nonverbally. Bernstein-Yamashiro and Noam (2013) claim that students who do not seek help verbally might perceive the teacher–student relationship as being "unwelcoming" and some teachers are not "ready to help all students develop relationships" (p. 20).

Analysis on how Mark and Juan were treated differently also rests on Ms Smith's statement directed to the whole class, "*think about what the word means to you and discuss it at your table.*" This statement was made shortly after reprimanding Juan, "*I told you not to touch that card!*" indicated that access to the card was currently forbidden, not just for Juan but also for the whole class. Yet, immediately after that reprimand, her statement "*think about what the word means to you and discuss it at your table*" signaled permission for everyone to see the card. The temporal positioning of these two statements lends support that Juan was forbidden access at one moment, yet seconds later everyone was permitted to have access. The learning community members were unable to speculate on why Ms Smith made the vocabulary word available to everyone seconds after depriving Juan from it; there did not seem to be any pedagogical advantage for this sequence.

Gee's other question about how language makes something or someone "relevant or irrelevant" is useful for analyzing Ms Smith's verbal and nonverbal communication. By giving Mark considerable leeway in violating norms and harshly reprimanding Juan for a minor violation, she signaled Mark's behavior as being relevant, normal, appropriate, and valued while Juan's behavior was deemed irrelevant, abnormal, inappropriate, and undervalued. In doing so, Mark's identity is liked, privileged, and has high status. Juan's identity is disliked, unprivileged, and has low status. While Ms Smith might not have consciously intended to communicate these kinds of differences in how she perceived students and the kind of relationship she had (or wanted to have) with them, her verbal and nonverbal behavior expressed unequal positions, and the inequality was noticed and confirmed by

the members of the learning community. As one member of the learning community put it, Ms Smith spent lots of time with Mark, gently reminded him to not touch the card and wait for instructions but she didn't seem to notice Juan or his distress. And when he reached for the card in such a delicate way, she snapped at him. Poor kid.

Analysis of the literacy lesson also involved comparing how Ms Smith treated males and females. Why did she place a card directly in front of a White boy at each table? Was this random or purposeful? Note that the first card was delivered to Geoff (desk #2) at position *B* in Figure 2. To achieve this, Ms Smith had to bypass a female student at desk #1. Next, she delivered a card to Mark at desk #6, in position *C*. It seems reasonable that she gave him a card because he was closest to her. Next, she went to position *D* and presented the card to Zach, bypassing a closer desk, #9, where Angelica was seated. Then, at the next group of desks, she bypassed two desks (#13 and #14) where two girls (Chloe and Miranda) were seated to leave a card on Chuck's desk at position *G*. Next, she went to the furthest desk in the room, #20, Andrew's desk at position *I*, bypassing closer desks, #17 and #19, where Rosa and Connie were seated. Bypassing female students required considerable effort, such as going around desks and walking to the furthest corners of the room. The learning community members saw no functional benefit associated with this protocol. Given that at least half the students were female and some of the boys were students of color, the chance of randomly giving a card to only White boys at each table violates the law of probability. Rather than assuming a chance mistake or intentional neglect of girls or students of color, the learning community concluded that Ms Smith's behavior more reflected unconscious preferences. One learning community member described the dynamics as being subtle and unusual: "At first, I didn't notice that none of the girls got a card, but after seeing the video numerous times it seems odd that Ms Smith went out of her way to give them only to the boys."

Note that Ms Smith referred to the group of desks as "*tables*" (lines 07 and 12) while giving instructions. Presumably, she viewed the grouped desks as a single table because she addressed the students as such, yet her attention to individual desks at each group suggests that she did not see them as a uniform collective. The fact that she delivered a card to select individuals at each *table*, giving control to some of the White boys while preventing access to others, added another thread of evidence about her unconscious preferences. As mentioned earlier, she purposefully organized the desks to establish a diverse configuration of students, yet at each group, she bypassed some students to prioritize others.

For studying the quality of the relationship between Ms Smith and the female students, Scheff and Retzinger's discourse analytic system was applied to the literacy lesson. None of the girls exhibited verbal or nonverbal cues of feeling upset about being bypassed. This finding suggests that they perceived Ms Smith's behavior as normal, relevant and appropriate because no slight was acknowledged. To a casual observer, Ms Smith's pattern of delivering the cards appeared to have a pedagogical purpose but the learning community rejected this idea.

Using Gee's system for analyzing the context of the literacy lesson, there was no other evidence of unequal treatment of males and females throughout the week. Other literacy lessons required group collaboration but with no designated student to control information. For example, Ms Smith asked for volunteers to lead a small group task, "someone from each group, please come up and get a stack of cards for your table." Other group activities showed girls and boys having equal access to materials (e.g. filling water glasses to collectively produce a musical scale, cutting paper into shapes to represent fractions, placing markers on number lines). Thus, there was no comparative basis along this line of investigation to indicate other forms of unfair gender treatment.

5. Conclusions

This particular case study has important lessons to consider because educational professionals did not initially notice the dysfunctional dynamics, suggesting that microaggressions are subtle and unconscious. While Ms Smith might not have intentionally prioritized White males, she unknowingly communicated the relative value of students by race/ethnicity and gender. While teachers do not normally have malicious intentions with reprimands, listeners make inferences about their meaning

(Gumperz, 1972; Searle, 1975). For third graders, a loud reprimand can potentially be understood as an assault because eight-year-olds are only beginning to understand the perspective of others (Erikson, 1950; Kohlberg, 1987; Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1962); they form egocentric interpretations about their encounters with adults, so almost any form of disrespect can be interpreted negatively.

Juan's harsh reprimand resulted in a pattern that fits what Scheff and Retzinger (1991) describe as unrepaired destructive conflict: (1) an offense was made; (2) the violator made no attempt to repair it; and (3) the receiver sensed the relationship was damaged. Perhaps this kind of dynamic can explain why some students fail to thrive. Brendgen, Wanner, Vitaro, Bukowski, and Tremblay (2007) reported that verbal abuse by teachers has a lasting impact on young students. Those who feel safe and connected with their teachers are more likely to reach out to them and make significant improvements in their behavior and achievement, a dynamic that was found by Wasley and Lear (2001) in their research at 90 schools. Framed in the context of power and status, Rex and Schiller (2009) would argue that the teacher's behavior was "face threatening," reinforcing unequal academic and social status. The girls in the classroom did not show overt signs of feeling disturbed by Ms Smith's bypassing behavior, suggesting that her offense was not overt. Instead, it was a form of neglect, a pattern that Sue (2010a, 2010b) described as microinvalidation.

My goal in this case study was not to generalize about all classroom dynamics or blame teachers for poor learning conditions, or argue that dysfunctional teacher–student relations are widespread. Rather, the goal was to understand how microaggressions are expressed in a single literacy lesson. When little is known about complex dynamics, such as teacher–student relationships and microaggressions, discourse analytic case studies can potentially shed more light on the micro details. "As long as microaggressions remain hidden, invisible, unspoken, and excused as innocent slights with minimal harm, we will continue to insult, demean, alienate, and oppress marginalized groups" (Sue, 2010b, p. 19).

Several general points should be made. First, although the data for this study were only from one literacy lesson in the context of a week-long set of recordings, the findings are not unusual. Studies cited earlier offer plenty of evidence that students are treated differently based on race/ethnicity and gender. Second, this study is more than another documentation of differential treatment because it attempted to precisely show the turn-by-turn dynamics of microaggressions. Although race/ethnicity and gender may underlie some of the observed differential treatment of students it is important to examine how microaggressions operate in classroom activities. Third, the cause of differential treatment is uncertain. Implicit in the preceding discussion was the argument that while the teacher intentionally structured the curriculum to respect and celebrate diversity her behavior showed a preference for some students and microaggressions toward others. It is possible that the White student frustrated the teacher and the very next student who touched the card bore the brunt of her frustration. Perhaps Mark had special needs and Ms Smith responded toward him with more care and she vented her frustration at a safer target. Without the benefit of Ms Smith's own interpretations, her intentions cannot be known. Another assumption was that the university professor, who recorded the classroom sessions and had been using them for instructional purposes, did so because she viewed the teacher as being a positive role model for teaching in a diverse classroom. Her later interpretation from discourse analysis led to removing the recordings from her training curriculum, lending support that a violation occurred—intentionally or not.

Microaggressions can be found even among the "best of the best," as Ms Smith was first described by Professor Jones. Even award-winning and highly respected teachers who are recognized as being sensitive to diversity can make serious mistakes. If these experts can fail to serve students equitably, then it stands to reason that all American educators could benefit from learning how to recognize microaggressions. As educators, we can become more mindful of our practice if we consider Scheff & Retzinger's theory of social bonds. Respectful messages are generally received as such and maintain or promote relationships, what Noblit (1993) and Noddings (1992) describe as a construct of care. Being public figures, we have an obligation to behave in respectful ways, modeling the behavior

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we expect from students. We should also carefully monitor children's behavior for cues of discomfort caused by microaggression, and when they occur, acknowledge and repair the situation, such as offering a proper apology (Chapman & Thomas, 2006) and lending help. If microaggression passes without repair, the result will be interminable conflict and the message that is conveyed to students is that they are undeserving and unequal.

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