Language Teaching and Educational Research

e-ISSN 2636-8102

Volume 4, Issue 1 | 2021

Are the Kids Alright? A Black Mother's Microethnography and How It Can Inform Early Childhood Educational Practices

Toni Denese Sturdivant

To cite this article:

Sturdivant, T. D. (2021). Are the kids alright? A Black mother's microethnography and how it can inform early childhood educational practices. *Language Teaching and Educational Research (LATER), 4*(1), 45-58.

LATER
http://dergipark.org.tr/later

Language Teaching and Educational Research
e-ISSN: 2636-8102 *LATER*, 2021: 4(1), 45-58
Turkish JournalPark ACADEMIC

Research Article

Are the kids alright? A Black mother's microethnography and how it can inform early childhood educational practices

Toni Denese Sturdivant ORCID
Assistant Professor, Texas A&M University-Commerce, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Commerce, Texas, USA

Abstract

This microethnography explores play, power, and discourse as it relates to Black racial identity development in two preschoolers aged two and four who are the author's daughters. Knowing more about the racialized content embedded within children's play can help early childhood educators plan diversity related experiences that account for the specific topics that children are thinking about. However, children may sensor themselves in classroom settings in a way that they do not in the comfort of their homes. For this reason, the researcher used her position as a mother to document authentic play experiences. Using the privilege of an insider positionality, the author used qualitative data collection methods which included observations, field notes, and audio transcriptions. Data was collected over the course of eight weeks in the home of the participants. With an aim to answer the research question: how does my daughters' play grapple with issues of race or issues related to race? The researcher used a racialized lens in examining their play. Data was analyzed in two tiers with the first tier using a lens of double consciousness, or an internal struggle between being oneself and being accepted by an oppressive society, and the final using intertextual critical discourse analysis. Findings revealed that the preschoolers in the study grappled with race in their play. Specifically, they displayed three types of discourse intertextuality, 1) responding to dominant discourse, 2) contradicting dominant discourse, and 3) confirming them. Implications for early childhood practitioners are discussed.

Received
30 March 2021

Accepted
26 April 2021

Keywords
race
play
early childhood

Suggested APA citation: Sturdivant, T. D. (2021). Are the kids alright? A Black mother's microethnography and how it can inform early childhood educational practices. *Language Teaching and Educational Research (LATER), 4*(1), 45-58.

Note(s) from the author(s)
» None

Author(s)' statements on ethics and conflict of interest
Ethics statement: I hereby declare that research/publication ethics and citing principles have been considered in all the stages of the study. I take full responsibility for the content of the paper in case of dispute.
Statement of interest: I have no conflict of interest to declare.
Funding: None
Acknowledgements: None

Lullaby
(for a Black mother)
My little dark baby,
My little earth-thing,
My little love-one,
What shall I sing
For your lullaby?
Stars,
Stars,
A necklace of stars
Winding the night.
My little black baby,
My dark body's baby,
What shall I sing
For your lullaby?
Moon,
Moon,
Great diamond moon,
Kissing the night.
Oh, little dark baby,
Night black baby,
Stars, stars,
Moon,
Night stars,
Moon,
For your sleep-song lullaby.

Langston Hughes

Introduction

Black positive racial identity development has been found to be correlated with achieving higher academic attainment, better grades, and overall social and emotional well-being (Brittian et al, 2013; Brittian, 2012; Byrd & Chavous, 2019; Carson, 2009; Cokley & Chapman, 2008; Gordon, 2009; Street, Harris-Britt & Walker, 2009; Tovar-Murray et al., 2012; Whittaker &Neville, 2010). In contrast, negative Black racial identity development has been shown to be associated with lower grades and less mental resilience in dealing with racist acts (Smalls et al., 2007; Zirkel & Johnson, 2016). For these reasons, when my daughter told me that I could have her dark skin because she did not want it, I felt that there was a need for an in-depth investigation. The problem is, as a mother, I was not sure where my children fell in terms of racial identity development, despite knowing that Black racial identity development is a major factor in the quality of life of a Black person. As a mother and educational researcher interested in Black racial identity development, I felt that it is my duty to know how my children are managing given the context in which they are developing, a society rife with unchecked anti-blackness.

Literature Review

Foucault conceptualized discourse and power as being interrelated as discourses are tools used to justify positions of power (Moran, 2010). Adults are not the only people that are aware of and function within discourse. Young children are very much aware of the discourses

of society and even use societal discourses in their play (Dumas, 2016, MacNaughton, Davis, & Smith, 2010; MacNevin & Berman, 2017; Sturdivant, 2021).

One of the prevalent discourses found in our society is anti-Blackness (Dumas, 2016). This anti-Blackness is not only found within our schooling systems and policies (Dumas, 2016) but also in the media to which many children are exposed, such as in fairy tales (Pfeifer, 2007) and films based on those fairy tales. These anti-Black discourses have been shown to impact children in their play, causing them to refuse to be black play characters (Earick, 2010), reject Black toys (MacNevin & Berman, 2017; Sturdivant & Alanis, 2020) and refuse to choose skin toned paint that matched their dark skin (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996).

Method

I utilized a micro-ethnographical approach to investigate the play discourse of a Black four-year-old and two-year-old. According to Mukherji and Albon (2009), "ethnographers focus on individuals' understandings of their social world as well as gaining an insight – at first hand – into the everyday habits, beliefs and language of the group they are studying" (p. 163). Further, I conducted a micro-ethnographical study in order to accurately analyze in great detail (Lebaron, 2008) the going-ons within the play of my two daughters. Over the course of eight weeks, as my daughters played, either with each other, alone or with me, I recorded and or took field notes about what was happening. Additionally, I asked questions about certain things that they said, as I would normally do.

I chose to study my children because I argue that this relationship was necessary in order to gain access to their authentic play and conversations given the time constraints of one semester. I collected data with the following broad question in mind, how does my daughters' play grapple with issues of race or issues related to race?

Setting

All data was collected in the home of the participants. The participants live in the Southwestern region of the United States in a home built in 1929. Their house is located in a neighborhood that is currently undergoing revitalization and gentrification. The home of the participants is around 1300 square feet and contains an office, two bedrooms, one bathroom, a yoga/meditation room, living, dining and mud rooms along with a kitchen. The data that was collected was collected in either the living room, the girls' bedroom, dining room or bathroom.

The living room is decorated in warm tones of browns, oranges and dark greens, adorned with wooden African statues from Tanzania and Kenya and African American paintings of African women. There are pictures in frames as well as canvas sized pictures of the participants, and a large, framed photo of my husband and I on our wedding day.

The participants, Ngozi and Khari, pseudonyms, share a bedroom and a bed, despite there being a bunk bed in the room. There is a child size table in the middle of the girl's bedroom, it is a wooden table with a dry erase tabletop and a built-in dry erase board in place of a cushion in the chairs. On one wall of the room there is a wooden shelf that contains materials with which to build, wooden discs, art materials and a box of found natural materials. Adjacent to this shelf is a rack of dress-up clothes, containing items such as tutus to costumes based on movie characters. On another wall there are more pretend play items such as old cell phones, and old event tickets. That shelf also includes blocks and ramp and ball building sets.

There is a pink and grey play kitchen with toy appliances and wooden food items from eggs to cucumbers. In the corner behind the door, there is a doctor's office, complete with an eye chart, x-ray, cabinet, stethoscopes, etc. The walls of the room are adorned with framed illustrations of Black girls in different hues, a poster sized map of Africa, a world map, as well as pictures of Black characters from movies, television shows and comic books. There are also handmade wooden letters and name plates showcasing the girls' names.

The dining room consists of a dark wood table that seats six. The table has cloth place mats with cloth napkins that work together to create a gray and sea blue color scheme that matches the Ghanaian hand painting of an African woman and her child which is affixed to the wall. There are also framed photographs of Toni Morrison and Angela Davis. Additionally, there is a shelf with blank canvases, white paper, construction paper, and paints that are easily accessible to the sisters.

The single bathroom in the house has grey ceramic tile with matching tile in the shower. There is a basket of bath toys usually drying out on top of the white porcelain bathtub. The toys consist of Black action figures from a popular comic book and movie, as well as sea animals, boats and small plastic balls. There is a full-length mirror affixed to the wall beside a towel rack which alternates between holding towels with an African American girl cartoon character or pink hooded towels decorated with animals.

Participants

Ngozi and Khari were two and four at the time of the study. The order of the names and ages intentionally may not align, in order to help to protect each child's individual identity. Both girls verbally agreed to take part in the study, though IRB approval was not necessary due to the participants being my children. The sisters both identify as Afrikan. Their parents were born and spent much of their childhood in southern states in the US. Their parents are African American, college educated, professionals.

Ngozi is a medium skin toned child with kinky hair that is often braided or twisted and adorned with beads or pulled into puffs. Prior to the study, while enrolled in a racially diverse childcare center, she showed a strong appreciation for herself and racial aspects of herself, including her hair texture and styles. This was made evident by her spending time appreciating her puffs, beads, and twists in the mirror and while video chatting with grandparents. Unfortunately, after no longer qualifying for admission to that center, the children were enrolled in another child development center and Ngozi almost immediately began rejecting her hair, skin color, and eye color, preferring more Eurocentric features. She made this new preference clear verbally, through art and during pretend play. Upon enrolling in public Pre-K these ideas continued as she was the only Black child in her classroom, and one of twelve in the school, Pre-K through twelfth grade. I, not wanting my daughters to have to continue to face similar identity issues that I had in the past, enrolled my daughters in a small Afrikan-centered independent school.

Khari is a light skinned child with long curly hair. Her hair is often plaited and styled by wrapping the plaits around her ponytail holder, creating a sort of Bantu knot. This style makes it rather difficult to fully grasp the length of her hair. Although both girls look like their parents, Khari appears to be half white to many people. Khari has not had similar issues as her

sister as far as racial identity goes. She, however, is very much aware of differences in skin hues as she has said on more than one occasion that her skin is "light" and her sister's is brown.

The researcher

Because the researcher is the tool used to gather, organize, and interpret the data in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014), I will present any potential biases as well as personal values. I am a Black (African American) woman and doctoral student (at the time of the study) who was born and raised in a rural town in North East Texas. I also spent a few years living in Virginia as well as a suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio. I remember being very much aware of race as early as age three. When I was three, my family lived in a townhome community where many young families lived. One of the families consisted of an interracial couple and their biracial (Black and White) child. This difference was very profound to me. I remember thinking, in my naiveté, how odd it was for this "Black" child to have a White mother.

When I was five years old my family moved to Ohio and we lived in a large apartment complex. I distinctly remember being one of two Black children that lived in the entire complex, as well as being one of three Black children that attended the elementary school where my half day kindergarten class was housed. It was in this same apartment complex that I realized that not only is race a human difference, but that it is also used by others.

My White "friends" (kids that lived in neighboring apartment buildings that were about the same age), would often ask me questions related to my race, such as why the palms of my hands were the same color as theirs and why my gums were not. While this may seem like simple curiosity, it was not. And at five I was acutely aware of the ways that I was treated differently by the group of curious friends. I was not invited to some birthday parties, teased, hit, called names, and given items and then was accused of stealing them.

One of the "friends" was a part of a family that immigrated from India. The daughter of the family made it clear that I was not to ever be in their apartment home when her dad was there because he did not like Black people. I can also remember wishing my hair was longer and hung down like the girls that made a point to talk about her hair. I would find myself staring at my hands, trying to figure out if my palms really were "white". In my pretend play, I would often drape a towel over my head so that I could pretend to have long hair that swayed as I moved my head.

In first grade my family moved to the Southern part of the United States. This relocation meant that I could then spend a great deal of time with my grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles. This was really the first time in my life, beyond infancy, that I spent a great deal of time with Black people, that weren't my parents, and it felt good. However, I can remember experiencing a cultural mismatch between my home environment and the school environment, upon entering school. Possibly because of past experiences, or maybe because I understood something about dominance, this cultural incongruence led to assimilation which manifested in the abandoning of speaking Black English, correcting close friends and loved ones, including grandparents, for "inappropriate" and "incorrect" behavior, speech, and noise level, creating social distance between myself and my family, as well as many of my African American peers. This social isolation led me to an intentional study of African and African American culture and educational practices benefitting African American students.

Upon becoming a mother, I soon saw that some of the same issues of racial identity development that I faced were becoming a problem for at least one of my daughters. This prompted me to enroll my children in an Afrikan-Centered school and almost instantly, both of my daughters started to talk about Black being beautiful and one started drawing pictures of herself with kinky hair, instead of the long flowy hair of before. This change prompted me to want to examine my daughters' play at home, hence, the present study.

Researcher positionality

I took a reflexive approach to positionality to this research, because I believe that researchers are not separate from the socio-political realities of the society in which we live (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). I used a critical race theory lens in my view of education and the greater society. That is to say that I believe that "race and racism are endemic, pervasive, widespread, and ingrained in society" (Milner, 2007, p. 395) and this belief heightens my awareness of situations and conversations that could be the result of living in a racist society.

According to Milner (2007) researchers using a frame of critical race theory, seeking to determine their position in relation to their participants, should ask and answer the following questions:

- What are the cultural and racial heritage and the historical landscape of the participants in the study? How do I know?
- In what ways do my research participants' racial and cultural backgrounds influence how they experience the world? How do I know?
- What do my participants believe about race and culture in society and education, and how do they and I attend to the tensions inherent in my and their convictions and beliefs about race and culture in the research process? Why? How do I know?
- How do I negotiate and balance my own interests and research agendas with those of my research participants, which may be inconsistent with or diverge from mine? How do I know?
- What are and have been some social, political, historical, and contextual nuances and realities that have shaped my research participants' racial and cultural ways or systems of knowing, both past and present? How consistent and inconsistent are these realities with mine? How do I know? (p. 395)

In the following sections, I will attempt to address some of the questions posed by Milner (2007) as they logically flow accounting for the ages of the participants.

Position towards participants: Because I studied the at home play of my own children, I consider myself to be an insider. My children and I share the same racial heritage and we started off our development in a similar setting as an extreme racial minority in most situations. However, our cultural identities diverge on one key aspect; I never experienced attending an Afrikan Centered school, as the participants were attending during the study.

I know that my oldest daughter is acutely aware of issues of race because she often brings them up or asks questions about them. She points out times of no or little representation of Black people in books, television shows, movies and advertisement, among other situations. She does this partly because I am teaching her to hold individuals and institutions accountable for erasing or not including the Black experience/perspective and because she is aware that she once attended a school that she refers to as "all White" and is now at a school with only "Afrikan people".

My children are comfortable being themselves around me, I see sides of them that they do not typically reveal around others. I also have a good understanding of the context in which their learning is occurring and the situations that frame their play, as myself and my husband choose the environments and situations to which they are exposed. Although, I am not with them while they are at school, I am aware of the curriculum and can more than reasonably ascertain from where certain ways of being, doing, and knowing come. Because my daughters are so young, they are either with my husband and myself, my parents or at school.

However, because of the close relationship I have with the participants, this creates a challenge in determining what information to share and what information to leave confidential. I feel that as their mother it is my duty to protect them and therefore will always have this in mind as I report their words and actions.

Position towards play: MacNaughton, Davis, and Smith (2010), drawing from the work of Foucault, asserted that racial discourses are delivered and redelivered by children, including young children through performance. This means that children are not only aware of the discourses of society, including those surrounding race, but those same discourses are salient enough to play a role in the actions of children. MacNaughton et al. (2010), argued that children perform their identities "within the constrained and bounded options constructed through the discourses available to them" (p. 137). MacNevin and Berman (2017) continued this argument by stating that "children are active agents who draw on the discourses available to them in the historical, social and political context in which they live. The discourses they draw upon may be observed in their play" (p. 829). With this being said, as a researcher concerned with race and racial identity development in young children, I expect to observe issues of race in the play of the participants and will naturally gravitate toward those situations.

Position towards the setting: I collected data in my own home. This is a place where I feel the most comfortable and the most like myself. I feel that this also adds to my insider position, as I am just as familiar with the physical environment as the participants themselves. However, this familiarity could have impacted my field notes. Because I am so familiar with the setting, it proved to be difficult to decide what needed to be stated and what could be left unsaid. An outsider might pay attention to environmental factors that I inadvertently glossed over.

Role of the researcher: As the mother of the participants and the researcher, I had no choice but to be both an observer and a participant. I cannot say that each time that I recorded and took notes that each role carried the same weight. I know that at times I had to participate more as my children needed help, and they came to me to seek this help, they needed me to become more involved. At other times, my children spent more time playing cooperatively

with one another, or by themselves. It was in these instances that I was more of an observer than a participant. I think there is value in both of the roles, and each allowed me to gather a more holistic picture of the play of my daughters.

Instruments

I used a mini microethnography approach to obtain "detailed insights" (Mukherji & Albon, 2009) into the play of Ngozi and Khari. I took field notes in my home on my laptop. There was a mix of field notes that were taken on the spot, as well as some that were written up after the event had taken place, but on the same day. The field notes were used to explain information that I observed but that was not able to be communicated through audio recordings.

The audio recordings were taken on a cell phone using a digital recording app. Once a recording session began, I placed the cell phone somewhere in the room with the participants in order to record their speech as they played. At the end of the study the audio recordings were transcribed by a transcription service. I then replayed each audio recording and checked the transcription text, making any necessary changes.

Data analysis procedure

Using the lens of double consciousness (Du Bois, 1999) and the Bakhtin intertextuality analysis method (Blackledge, 2012), I analyzed the data using two-tiered analysis. First, I read through all of the field notes and transcripts and coded the data by marking instances in which the girls acted in a way or said something that would reveal a double consciousness (Du Bois, 1999). After the relevant data was marked, codes drawing from the discussion of power and discourse found in Blackledge (2012) were developed and used to group and describe the discussions and actions of the participants. For example, Blackledge (2012) paraphrased Bakhtin (1981) by stating "discourse bears the traces of the voices of others, is shaped by them, responds to them, contradicts them or confirms them, in one way or another evaluates them" (p. 619). After marking instances of double consciousness and intertextuality (Blackledge, 2012), I grouped examples of specific types of intertextuality, such as instances that responded to dominant discourse.

Findings

Based on the research question, how does Ngozi and Khari's play grapple with race, the following themes were revealed after data analysis. Ngozi and Khari in fact grappled with race in their play, as did other young children in existing research (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996). Additionally, Khari and Ngozi utilized three of the four ways that discourse can portray intertextuality (Blackledge, 2012), responding to dominant discourse, contradicting dominant discourses as well as confirming them.

Responding to dominant discourse

For the purposes of this study, I defined responding to dominant discourse as talk and or actions that acknowledged an understanding of the prevailing discourse but neither overtly confirmed nor necessarily contradicted it.

One day Ngozi was looking at the poster sized graphic art on her and Khari's wall with Khari and me. This particular artwork showcased three individually framed 8.5x11 pictures of Black girls of different hues and different natural hair styles. Ngozi called me into her room so that she could tell me which ones she liked the best.

Ngozi: Alright, so this the first one backwards. The lightest, the middlest and the darkest

Khari: And the sleepiest with a book.

Mama: So that's the order that you like them?

Ngozi: Yeah.

Mama: Why?

Ngozi: Because I just do.

Mama: So I notice that you say you like the one with the lighter skin the best, then with the next lighter skin then with the darkest skin. So you have light, medium, dark, like that?

Ngozi: Yeah

Mama: But why? Is it because of the color of their skin?

Ngozi: And I notice that both tend to have earrings. Like me.

Mama: Did you rank them like that because of the color of their skin?

Ngozi: Nope.

Mama: Why?

Ngozi: Because I wanted them to be like that.

It seemed that this could have been a case of confirming a dominant discourse, but when pushed further Ngozi insisted that she had not ranked them in that order because of their skin hue, although she was aware of the different tones, as that is the way she referred to each picture.

During a different instance Ngozi began to describe a beautiful woman that she had recently dreamed about.

Ngozi: Well, she braid her hair like this..

Mama: Was she an Afrikan person, a…

Ngozi :Yes.

Mama: What was her skin like?

Ngozi: Brown skin.

Mama: Brown skin like your brown skin or a different brown skin?

Ngozi: It was very, it was [Khari's] color of skin.

Mama: OK, so light brown.

Ngozi: Yeah, and she braid her hair like this. And then she put her hair like this… And then she-

Mama: So she had a really long braid that she wrapped around her head?

Ngozi: Yeah. 'Cause she wanted her hair to be like Joiner.

Mama: What kind of hair did she have?

Ngozi: Kinky

While Ngozi's beautiful woman was not a blonde hair blue eyed European with a tan, she was also not a woman that looked very much like her.

Contradicting dominant discourse

Ngozi and Khari were not always somewhere in between accepting and contradicting anti-blackness, there were instances where one or both of them outright contradicted them. For example, Khari and Ngozi were playing family in their room. Ngozi was playing the role of the mother and Khari was a big sister to a doll. Ngozi told big sister to get her little sister ready for the concert by doing her hair. The following exchange took place.

Ngozi: Because the concert needs beautiful hair.
Khari (to the doll): The concert needs beautiful hair, like my hair. Like my hair…
Ngozi: And Mommy's hair.
Khari: And Mommy's hair.
Ngozi: Their hair is so, our hair is so beautiful
Khari: Our hair is so beautiful.
Ngozi (to doll): So is yours.
Khari (to doll): So is yours.

This type of contradiction also occurred while playing with a monster puppet in the living room. The puppet goes with a book that features a green monster. The front side of the puppet is green, but all of the rest of the puppet, including the back, is black. Ngozi turned the puppet over to the back side and said she was turning the monster into a black monster.

Mama: Why did you want to change the monster from green to black?
Ngozi: Because he's scar- to make it even scarier.
Mama: Why, uh, what makes black scarier?
Ngozi: Oh, so it can be a beautiful monster.
Mama: If it was a beautiful monster then it's scary?
Ngozi: No. Black is beautiful, so a black monster.

The assertion of "Black is beautiful" was created to and continues to be a phrase to contradict the prevailing idea that Eurocentric standards of beauty are not the only ones that exist and should not be used to judge the appearance of all people.

Another example occurred while I was styling Ngozi's hair as we were getting ready to leave for the day. She expressed a desire to change an aspect of her hair to make it more beautiful, but while also contradicting a dominant discourse.

Ngozi: I want my hair to be my favorite colors, pink and white.
Mama: OK, so if I dyed your hair pink and it was still kinky, coily hair would you think it was beautiful?
Ngozi: Yeah. Please do that Mama, can you?

Khari also contradicted a kinky hair is not beautiful discourse that day.

Mama: [Khari], do you think your hair is beautiful?
Khari: No, I want hair as [Ngozi].

Ngozi has tightly coiled hair that naturally makes an afro and shrinks up substantially, not revealing its true length, not the hair that is routinely lauded for its beauty by those in control of media images.

Additionally, while the girls were painting in the dining room one evening, Ngozi made some comments about the color black as she used it to paint. Ngozi and Khari were sitting at the dining room table using acrylic paints on construction paper. Khari had a set of neon-colored paints, while Ngozi's set included primary colors as well as black and white. Ngozi said that she was going to paint nature. While using the black paint to paint clouds at the top of her piece of construction paper she said, "Black clouds. Beautiful black." After that, she painted a rainbow and included the color black stating "… and the beautiful black on the rainbow." These statements are in direct opposition to what is conventionally believed about the color black (Pfeifer, 2007), especially as it would relate to clouds and a rainbow.

Confirming dominant discourse

While there were times where both Ngozi and Khari took an oppositional stance toward harmful discourse, there were also instances in which they confirmed them. Firstly, the instance presented above about the scary black monster is an example. Although Ngozi attempted to save face by stating that "black is beautiful", her initial statement that she made the monster black to make it scarier confirms a prevailing notion that black is scary, bad and evil (Earick, 2010).

Ngozi also confirmed through her speech harmful discourse beyond colors, but about actual race. Khari and Ngozi had just gotten out of the bathtub. They were using their hooded towels and pretending that it was their hair, as they walked into the other room to get dressed.

Mama: Wait, so now the towel is your hair?

Ngozi: (giggle) yeah.

Mama: But I'm noticing that that hair is hanging down and is not growing out like African hair.

Ngozi: We're pretending we're white people.

Mama: Why are you pretending you're white people?

Ngozi: Because I just love white, beautiful skin.

Moving beyond a love for white skin and long flowy hair, Ngozi also expressed dislike for herself as she began to get dressed.

Mama: Do you think your hair is beautiful?

Ngozi: Yeah. No. Not my real hair, but this do (referring to the towel that was still on her head)

Mama: Why don't you think your real hair is beautiful?

Ngozi: Because I don't.

Discussion

After collecting and analyzing the data it became clear that both girls were in fact aware of the discourse around them. Although they were only two and four at the time of the study, they showed great knowledge of our society's concepts of race and color. This remains consistent with previous research involving young children, race, and discourse

(MacNaughton, Davis & Smith, 2010; Sturdivant, 2021), however, by using an intertextuality analysis (Blackledge, 2012) it also illuminated that more happened than the girls simply grabbing discourses and throwing them into their play.

Ngozi and Khari would sometimes embrace kinky hair and in other times reject it. The instance with the green turned black monster shows that Ngozi has a conscious understanding that there are two contradicting discourses available: black is scary and black is beautiful. In that instance she moved through the two notions, not being sure which would be the most appropriate in that situation. I argue that this reveals the presence of a double consciousness (Du Bois, 1999), even within young children. Du Bois (1999) described his notion of a double consciousness in the following way:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,-- an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p.11)

Ngozi and Khari clearly saw themselves through the eyes of hegemony as they pretended to be white and have European hair. But they also saw themselves for who they really are as they talked about the beauty of kinky hair. These young children, both under five, showed an internal struggle with discourse as it relates to power.

Conclusion and Implications

It is my sincere belief that my kids will be alright, that they will continue to develop and learn and will gradually develop the tools to more consistently contradict harmful discourse, as well as to begin evaluating discourse, which is the last form of intertextuality but was not present in the study. However, with the girls attending an Afrikan-centered school and living in a home that expresses a love for Blackness in the decorations, materials, toys and even location, it becomes evident just how salient harmful discourse can be. We as a society, parents, teachers, producers of media, neighbors and friends must do our part to stop transmitting harmful anti-black discourse as well as making a point to contradict them as often as possible. Black children are listening, and they are internalizing both the confirmatory and the contradicting messages.

References

Bakhtin, M. M., & Holquist, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays: Vol.* no. 1. University of Texas Press.

Blackledge, A. (2012). Discourse and power. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Routledge.

Brittian, A. S. (2012). Understanding African American adolescents' identity development: A relational developmental systems perspective. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *38*(2), 172–200. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798411414570

Brittian, A., Umana-Taylor, A., Lee, R., Zamboanga, B., Kim, S., Weisskirch, R., Castillo, L., Whitbourne, S., Hurley, E., Huynh, Q., Brown, E., & Caraway, S. (2013). The moderating role of centrality on

associations between ethnic identity affirmation and ethnic minority college students' mental health. *Journal of American College Health*, *61*(3), 133–140. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2013.773904

Byrd, C. M., & Chavous, T. M. (2009). Racial identity and academic achievement in the neighborhood context: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *38*(4), 544–559. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-008-9381-9

Carson, L. R. (2009). "I am because we are:" Collectivism as a foundational characteristic of African American college student identity and academic achievement. *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal, 12*(3), 327–344. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-009-9090-6

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011) *Research methods in education*. (7th ed.) New York: Routledge

Cokley, K. O., & Chapman, C. (2008). The roles of ethnic identity, anti-white attitudes, and academic self-concept in African American student achievement. *Social Psychology of Education*, *11*(4), 349–365. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-008-9060-4

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: *Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1999) *The souls of Black folk.* H. L. Gates & T. H. Oliver (Eds.). (Norton Critical Ed.) New York: W.W. Norton and Company

Dumas, M. J. (2016). Against the dark: Antiblackness in education policy and discourse. *Theory into Practice*, *55*(1), 11–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2016.1116852

Earick, M. E. (2010). The power of play and language on early childhood racial identity in three U.S. schools. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education, 4*(2), 131–145. https://doi.org/10.1080/15595691003635955

Gordon, D. M., Iwamoto, D. K., Ward, N., Potts, R., & Boyd, E. (2009). Mentoring urban Black middle school male students: Implications for academic achievement. *The Journal of Negro Education, 78*(3), 277–289.

Lebaron, C. (2008) Microethnography. *The International Encyclopedia of Communication, 7*(1), 3120–3124.

MacNaughton, G., Davis, K., & Smith, K. (2010). Working and reworking children's performance of "whiteness" in early childhood education. In M. O'Loughlin &; R. T. Johnson (Eds.), *Imagining children otherwise: Theoretical and critical perspectives on childhood subjectivity* (Vol. 46, pp. 135–155). Peter Lang

MacNevin, M., & Berman, R. (2017). The Black baby doll doesn't fit the disconnect between early childhood diversity policy, early childhood educator practice, and children's play. *Early Child Development and Care*, *187*(5–6), 827–839.

Milner, R. (2007) Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher, 36*(7), 388–400. https://doi.org/10 .3102/0013189 X07309471.

Moran, J. (2010). *Interdisciplinarity* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Mukherji, P., & Albon, D. (2009). *Research methods in early childhood: An introductory guide.* SAGE Publications.

Park, C. C. (2011). Young children making sense of racial and ethnic differences: A sociocultural approach. *American Educational Research Journal*, *48*(2), 387–420. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831210382889

Pfeifer, T. H. (2009) Deconstructing cartesian dualisms of western racialized systems: A study in the colors black and white. *Journal of Black Studies 39*(4), 528–47. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934706298192.

Schmiesing, A. (2016). Blackness in the Grimms' fairy tales. *Marvels & Tales, 30*(2), 210–233.

https://doi.org/10.13110/marvelstales.30.2.0210

Smalls, C., White, R., Chavous, T., & Sellers, R. (2007). Racial ideological beliefs and racial discrimination experiences as predictors of academic engagement among African American adolescents. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *33*(3), 299–330. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798407302541

Street, J., Harris-Britt, A., & Walker-Barnes, C. (2009). Examining relationships between ethnic identity, family environment, and psychological outcomes for African American adolescents. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *18*(4), 412–420.https://doi.org/10.1007 /s10826-008-9245-7

Sturdivant, T. D. (2021). Complying and resisting: A qualitative metasynthesis of the race and gender discourses found in the play of young children. *Journal of Educational Studies and Multidisciplinary Approaches, 1*(2), 85-96. Doi: https://doi.org/ 10.51383/jesma.2021.10

Sturdivant, T., & Alanis, I. (2020). I'm gonna cook my baby in a pot: Young Black girls' racial preferences and play behaviors. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 49*, 473-482. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-020-01095-9

Tovar-Murray, D., Jenifer, E. S., Andrusyk, D'Angelo, J.R., & King, T. (2012) Racism-related stress and ethnic identity as determinants of African American college students' career aspirations. *Career Development Quarterly, 60*(3), 254–262. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2012.00021.x.

Van Ausdale, D., & Feagin, J. R. (2001). *The first r: How children learn race and racism.* Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Whittaker, V. A., & Neville, H. A. (2010). Examining the relation between racial identity attitude clusters and psychological health outcomes in African American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *36*(4), 383–409. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798409353757

Zirkel, S., & Johnson, T. (2016). Mirror, mirror on the wall: A critical examination of the conceptualization of the study of black racial identity in education. *Educational Researcher*, *45*(5), 301–311. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X16656938