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DISSERTATION:**

**MONTESORI GUIDE DECISION-MAKING: HOW ELEMENTARY
MONTESORI GUIDES MADE INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS**

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by

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DISSERTATION

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Dedication

For my family. Thank you for encouraging me. You always believed I could do it! To
all the dreamers of the world, dreams do come true!!

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MONTESSORI GUIDE DECISION-MAKING: HOW ELEMENTARY MONTESSORI GUIDES MADE INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS

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Teacher decision-making is referred to as the fundamental responsibility of teachers. All teachers are asked to make decisions on a daily basis in their classrooms. For decades researchers have collected data on teacher decision-making in hopes to understand how teachers make decisions and why. Interestingly, most researchers collect data on teacher decision-making only in public school classrooms. The purpose of this study was to collect teacher decision-making data in a nearly unexplored classroom environment, the lower elementary Montessori classroom. The objective of this study was to examine what characteristics operated in the decision-making of two lower elementary Montessori guides. The hypothesis was lower elementary Montessori guides may have more opportunities to understand and approach care and culturally responsive teaching given the Montessori environment seeks to develop the whole child.

In order to explore lower elementary Montessori guide decision-making I chose to perform a qualitative case study design. First, I gathered information about the school. Second, I collected data on the two lower elementary Montessori guides in this study. Once data was collected I reviewed the data for emerging themes. Then, I asked the question how was care and cultural responsiveness understood and approached in the decision-making of these two lower elementary Montessori guides.

The findings of this study revealed three (3) main influences on the decision-making of lower elementary Montessori guides at River Montessori: (1) Association Montessori Internationale Training (AMI); (2) school ideology; and (3) guide improvisation based on student observation. Care and cultural responsiveness was understood and approached by both lower elementary Montessori guides in this study. However, the enactments of cultural responsiveness fell short of normative understandings of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; 2002).

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Chapter I: Introduction

All teachers make professional decisions in multiple ways in an active classroom culture. Within the literature, teacher decision-making is referred to as the fundamental responsibility of teachers' practice (Hawthorne, 1992; Shavelson, 1973; Shulman, 1986). According to Boote (2006) teachers should have discretion; allowing them the ability to act on problems, formulate answers and implement solutions as necessary. Autonomous teacher decision-making is reportedly declining in American public schools. The continued presence of *No Child Left Behind* legislation has created pressures for teachers to follow a pre-determined curricular guide. Given these pressures from the state, teachers are aligning their decisions and actions with what is sanctioned by the governing structures (Boote, 2006; Hatch, 2002; Pelletier, Legault, & Seguin, 2002; Valli, Croninger, Chambliss, Graeber, & Buese, 2008), even when these fail to align with developmentally appropriate practice (Brown & Goldstein, 2010)—what many argue the child needs and deserves (Montessori, 1973; Piaget, 1969). When teachers have less control over their classroom situations and professional life, there is teacher attrition (Gilbert, 2011). The end result is, a talented crop of teachers leave the profession in search of a more autonomous professional life (Cloud, 2010).

Understanding teachers' thoughts and actions, in relation to active classroom life, has been an interest of education researchers for decades (Jackson, 1968). Interestingly, most research on teacher decision-making is collected within a public school space

(Calderhead, 1987; Kennedy, 2005; Riner, 2000; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007) despite the assertions noted in literature of the pressures from legislation causing teachers to conform to a regimented scope and sequence (Pelletier et al., 2002). Research collected within a public school environment on teacher decision-making, may not yield full insight on how teachers' think and act in relation to classroom life. The governing structures in public schools may be confining and restricting teacher autonomy relating to the student, the environment, and the community. Constraints exist within lesson planning and the development of curricular units, which are typically decided upon ahead of time (before teachers meet students) and presented to students in a sequential, preplanned manner (Hunter, 1994). This is often referred to as the curriculum scope and sequence, or guide. In addition, public school teachers typically make curricular decisions for the group as a whole (Hunter, 1994; Tyler, 1949). Teachers do differentiate instruction based on individual's abilities and needs, but this is an afterthought not a priority. Teachers are urged to pay close attention to all students' needs, interests, and strengths when differentiating the curriculum: be flexible and creative (Watts-Taffe, Laster, Broach, Marinak, Connor, & Walker-Dalhouse, 2013).

Research has yet to focus extensively on learning about pedagogy and teacher's thought processes and actions within environments outside of the public school. Examining the teacher decision-making of a Montessori guide stands to offer a fresh perspective on how a teacher, trained to care and respond to the child's personal needs, thinks and acts about the child and the curriculum, within a prepared environment.

The Montessori environment has been compared in the literature to tenets of good cognitive science (Lillard, 2005). It is noted that Montessori classrooms are spaces without rewards and punishments. Environments without rewards and punishments have been supported by human motivation research (Pink, 2011). Montessori education has been in the news recently purporting well-known business tycoons whom were all Montessori trained including Google's founders, Larry Page and Sergei Brin, and Wikipedia founder, Jimmy Wales (Sims, 2011). The numbers of public Montessori charter schools are growing every year (Ungerer, 2011). One reason noted in *Montessori Life Magazine* is families are gravitating toward the tenets of Montessori, seeking the opportunity to have their whole child seen and empowered (Robinson, 2006).

This exploratory case study investigates how two lower elementary Montessori guides applied the theoretical tenets of Montessori education in an environment where the child and the environment are theorized to come first. I intended to explore how Montessori guides applied the ideals of Montessori education in their classrooms. In particular, what kinds of decisions Montessori guides made related to students, the environment, and the curriculum? The frameworks I used to examine whether and how these Montessori guides made decisions was two-fold: (1) with notions of care (Noddings, 1992; 2005); and (2) with notions of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; 2002).

Two research questions guided this exploratory case study:

- 1) What defining characteristics operated in the decision-making of guides in the Montessori elementary classroom?

2) How was care and cultural responsiveness understood and approached in the decision-making of guides in the Montessori lower elementary classroom?

The goal of this research was to examine guide decision-making in a prepared environment. This Montessori school operated differently than public schools. River Montessori had different governing structures, as well as different approaches to instruction and the learning space. Instruction was performed within the context of a story using a key lesson format (Montessori, 1948/1967) and the classroom was prepared for the child as the main teaching tool (Montessori, 1948/1967). A working assumption in this study was that lower elementary Montessori guides had considerable opportunities to make decisions based on care and culture given Montessori's unique prepared environment and the belief that the whole child was worth developing.

According to the literature, Montessori guides have opportunities to think and act toward care and culture because they were trained to observe the child first, and second to enable the child to be psychically balanced and developed as a whole person (Lillard, 1972; Lillard, 1996; Montessori, 1948/1967). Recognizing a whole person necessarily included the child's culture and the capacity to care. Learning more about what characteristics operated in the decision-making of lower elementary Montessori guides will bring a fresh perspective to the existing literature on teacher decision-making. In particular, how care and culturally responsive teaching was

understood and approached within the lower elementary Montessori classrooms in this study.

Definitions and Theoretical Frameworks

Montessori Education

Montessori education was named after its founder Dr. Maria Montessori. Montessori was the first female to obtain an M.D. from the University of Rome at the age of 26. She became interested in education in 1898, while working in a children's asylum (Montessori, 1960/1966). Observing the children in the asylum foraging for crumbs on the floor, like animals, sparked an interest in finding ways to simultaneously stimulate children's hands and their minds. Influenced by Jean-Marc Itard and Eduard Seguin's methods of teaching and learning, Montessori developed sensorial materials to provide these children with experiences training their five senses using didactic materials (Lillard, 2005).

In 1901 Montessori worked with the developmentally challenged, including the mentally handicapped, using her didactic materials. All of the children with whom Montessori influenced with her simultaneous hand and mind tactics passed state educational tests designed for normal children (Lillard, 2005). Her success with these children "aroused international attention" (Lillard, 2005, p. 16). The press shifted their attention from Montessori's success with developmentally challenged children to the

state of education in Rome, wondering why normal children were not performing better on these same tests. In 1907, Montessori was offered the opportunity to open a laboratory school in a poor tenement housing project in San Lorenzo, Italy (Kramer, 1976). The tenement community had a problem with entertaining the children while their parents were away working. Montessori accepted the job, opened the school, and named it the Casa Dei Bambini, or the Children's House.

According to Montessori (1960/1966):

The Montessori method is scientific education. Knowledge of childhood is its foundation. It is built on the discovered laws of the development of the body and mind of the child (p. 1).

The aims of Montessori education were to nurture the child to his or her full potential by freeing the child to follow his or her developmental needs in an environment free from barriers. The Montessori environment was referred to as the prepared environment. A prepared environment was a planned space with simple beauty and didactic materials arranged sequentially from more concrete activities to more abstract (Lillard, 2005). The role of the teacher was secondary to both the child and the environment. The teacher was referred to as the guide, or an individual prepared to first observe the child, and then to follow the child, based on his or her developmental readiness. In this study, I refer to the two teachers as guides, since this was the label given to a Montessori teacher by Dr. Montessori.

Historically, the reception of Montessori was initially very strong. In the 1910's she began traveling the world opening schools, lecturing, and connecting new schools with Montessori trainers in the US and abroad. In 1929 she founded the Association

Montessori Internationale in Amsterdam. Her methodology became a movement with many influential followers including: Alexander Graham Bell and his wife, and S.S. McClure, a historical icon in American journalism (Chattin-McNichols, 1981). The success of Montessori in the United States was initially short-lived. By 1920 the Montessori movement was dead. Bad business and public scrutiny from a leading researcher at Teacher's College Columbia University led to the decline of Montessori's popularity in the United States.

In the late 1940's a young scholar named Nancy McCormick Rambusch reignited the Montessori flame, which burns to this day in the United States and abroad (Chattin-McNichols, 1981). In 2011, the Association Montessori Internationale and American Montessori Society each created a division to oversee Montessori methodology in public charter schools offering free tuition. Both organizations felt strongly that all children should have access to a Montessori education.

Care

Nel Noddings (1992; 2005) is a leading scholar in the area of conceptualizing care in the classroom. She insisted "the main aim of education should be a moral one, that of nurturing the growth of competent, caring, loving, and loveable persons" (Noddings, 2005, p.ix). For Noddings (2005) an ethic of care required responsiveness from the

teacher. She stated, “caring teachers listen and respond differentially to their students” (Noddings, 2005, p. 19).

According to Noddings (2005) schools needed to make continuity and care a priority. Continuity in this sense included continuity of place, of people, of purpose, and of curriculum. Continuity of place asserted students should stay in the same school building for more than two or three years.

The basic guiding idea is to make the school into a family-like center of care. We must stop moving children from place to place in order to solve social problems or satisfy their developmental needs (p. 67).

Students stayed with one teacher for two or more years, rather than the typical one-year arrangement. Noddings (2005) also supported making lunchtime a center of care, or a community event where students and teachers interacted like family, eating together and utilizing this time to learn more about each other, as well as more about the curriculum. In addition, schools with continuity opened their classroom doors to the community and parents allowing for the development of a greater sense of community and connectedness. Lastly, the curricular “material offered in school should pass the important test of being connected to students’ personal experience—past and future” (Noddings, 2005, p. 70).

Given her passion for care in the classroom Noddings (1992; 2005) argued for the curriculum to be organized around centers of care including care for self, for intimate others, for associates and acquaintances, for distant others, for nonhuman animals, for plants and the physical environment, for the human-made world of objects and instruments, and for ideas (p. xiii). Noddings outlined education for care as: modeling,

dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Teachers who practiced care were careful and deliberate about appropriate word choice and their interactions with people, objects, animals, and ideas.

According to Noddings modeling care was paramount. She exclaimed, “We have to show how to care in our relation with cared-fors” (Noddings, 1992, p. 22). This meant showing students how to care by creating caring relationships with all others. Modeling was vital, given “the capacity to care may be dependent on adequate experience in being cared for” (Noddings, 1992, p. 22). The teacher not only modeled care, but also took advantage of explaining what he or she was doing and why it was important. This is commonly referred to as the teacher think aloud process.

A second essential component of moral education was dialogue. Dialogue for Noddings directly related to the idea of dialogue espoused in the work of Paulo Friere (1970).

It is not just talk or conversations—certainly not an oral presentation or argument in which the second party is merely allowed to ask an occasional question. Dialogue is open-ended; that is, in a genuine dialogue, neither party knows at the outset what the outcome or decision will be. As parents and teachers, we cannot enter into dialogue with children when we know that our decision is already made. (Noddings, 1992, p. 23)

Thus, dialogue was a search for understanding, empathy, and appreciation between the carer and the cared-for. Children and teachers connected to one another through dialogue and exchange. Dialogue helped to maintain caring relations amongst the learning community.

Practicing care was a third component of moral education. All students needed to develop the “attitude and mentalities (of the carer/cared for relationship)...shaped, at least in part by experience” (Noddings, 1992, p. 23). Practice included providing opportunities for students to gain skills in caregiving, and also developing attitudes of care. According to Noddings such opportunities for care did not just happen; they were planned. To enact this plan, some schools intentionally arrange for students to collaborate with the community through community service activities. Such an authentic opportunity to care for the greater community focused attention on acts of care outside of the school system. Thus, attention was not given to receiving a proper grade in the area of care, but in experiencing care to benefit others, not the self.

The fourth component of moral education was confirmation. Noddings defined confirmation as “an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others” (Noddings, 1992, p. 25). According to Noddings when we confirmed someone, we discovered a better self and encouraged its development. This required the teacher to know his or her students well. The teacher saw the students’ dreams and ambitions as worthy goals. Confirmation of care, commenced with a trusting relationship between the carer and cared-for. Within this trusting, caring relationship the teacher confirmed care by also keeping students’ dreams and ambitions grounded in reality.

A teacher with care was further characterized by engrossment and motivational displacement (Noddings, 1992). Engrossment entailed attention and perceptiveness from the carer for the cared-for. The carer knew the cared-for’s life story, interests, and social experiences, listening and receiving personal information and opening the pathway for a

reciprocal relationship. Motivational displacement was the energy produced by the carer for the cared-for, asking the carer to flow her or his energy toward the cared-for and his or her projects.

Without a personal connection between the carer and cared-for there was no care. A prerequisite for care was a reciprocal connection where both the carer and cared-for received, recognized, and responded to each other's care. Caring could not be reduced to a set of specific behaviors. Indeed, "caring is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors" (Noddings, 2005, p. 17). It was a relationship filled with human complexities and intricacies.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is a theory positioned within a cultural context asserting that all efforts to educate involved culture. Culture was defined as:

...A dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our lives as well as the lives of others. (Gay 2000; from Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991)

According to Banks (2007) the nature of culture included a shared core culture, or macroculture, and smaller cultures, or microcultures. Cultural differences occurred when each macro and micro culture behaved or exhibited beliefs from a specific perspective, cultural norm, or interpretation. How people thought and acted was a result of their personal lived histories, which were bound within a cultural identity. However,

regardless of which cultural life one lived, shared ideals existed and connected us as humans. These shared ideals included: human rights, freedom, individualism, individual opportunity and meritocracy (Gay, 2000).

CRT was defined as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2000). It was based on the assumption that:

...When academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly. (Gay, 2000)

The result was improved academic achievement for ethnically diverse students (Allen & Butler, 1996; Au & Kawakami, 1991; Gay, 2000; 1997).

According to Gay (2002) there were five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching: (1) developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum; (2) demonstrating care; (3) building learning communities; (4) communicating with ethnically diverse students; and (5) responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of the curriculum. The first essential element was to develop a cultural diversity knowledge base. This element explained how teachers could not teach what they did not know. CRT required appropriate and accurate knowledge of both students and the subject matter content knowledge. Recognizing the dangers of essentializing, this knowledge demonstrated an understanding of the cultural repertoires of practice (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003) associated with culturally different groups. In particular, culturally responsive teachers anticipated individuals in groups possessed different understandings of community living and problem solving impacting

their educational motivation, aspiration, and task performance. They also knew children from different cultural groups appropriated varying protocols for approved ways to interact with adults in instructional settings (Guitierrez & Rogoff, 2003).

Gay (2002) emphasized teachers utilizing a culturally responsive approach to teaching had and could access appropriate instructional strategies aligned with diverse ethnic groups cultural expectations. Knowledge of detailed factual information about the cultural histories of specific ethnic groups (e.g. African, Asian, Latino, and Native American) increased students' interest in learning (Gay, 2000; 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; 1995; Irvine, 2010). It additionally helped to transform the dominant, mainstream official knowledge often found in schools (Apple, 1993; 2000). Thus, in order to implement CRT, teachers enact accurate knowledge of the various kinds of curriculum and use pedagogical strategies aligned with all culturally different groups within the classroom.

Gay (2002) referred to three kinds of curricula predominately found in the classroom: (1) the formal plans for instruction approved by the policy and governing bodies of educational systems (state standards, district standards, and approved textbooks); (2) the symbolic curriculum, which included images, symbols, icons, mottoes, awards, celebrations, and other artifacts that are enforced to teach students knowledge, skills, morals, and values; and (3) the societal curriculum which was the portrayal of knowledge, ideas, and impressions about ethnic groups by the mass media.

According to Gay (2002), a culturally responsive teacher looked critically at the subject matter content within the given curriculum and made decisions about what and

how to teach about issues of difference, diversity and social justice. It was within this decision-making process where teachers understood the power of providing students the tools necessary to be engaged with multiple funds of knowledge and perspectives. This included acquiring a clear recognition of how diverse voices, perspectives, and experiences associated with non-dominant (marginalized) groups were and continue to be omitted and essentialized in the mainstream official curriculum.

Culturally responsive teachers questioned the common forms of symbolic and material curriculum presented within their classroom space. For example, the types of bulletin board decorations on the walls. The heroes and heroines displayed in the classroom. Trade books that were used to support the formal plans. The language used in the classroom to communicate behavior expectations including types of rewards and punishments implemented to motivate students to behave and engage with their work.

The human need for collaboration was a central feature of CRT. Cooperation, community, and connectedness were only possible when children and teachers were allowed to act and interact with one another in a critical fashion. The CRT teacher knew where the standard curriculum omitted necessary information or abated sensitive historical events perpetuating an Americanized understanding of reality. Collaborative dialogue enhanced the experience for the student. It allowed the student to debate and inquire, wonder and assert, and at times co-construct knowledge previously learned through rote memorization

Fundamentally CRT recognized the teacher as the critical tool for enabling all students to experience a curriculum that valued their unique cultural backgrounds, while

also seeking to transform how knowledge was understood and used in the classroom. Practices that were supportive of culturally responsive teaching called upon the teacher to perform a dynamic, yet balanced form of instruction sensitive to the whole child. Culturally responsive teaching posited an active, student-centered classroom where students were encouraged to have a cultural identity and presence in the classroom and the world.

Preview of Remaining Chapters

Nel Noddings asserted care was the “building block” necessary for optimal learning (1992). Geneva Gay referenced care as a “moral imperative, a social responsibility, and a pedagogical necessity” (2000). Care, according to Noddings and Gay was much more than the notion of gentle nurturing and altruistic concern. Rather, it was arguably a construct where in learning could and should take place. In both theoretical frameworks there was a clear vision of a child who practiced care. In this study, I argue both Noddings and Gay were supportive of care for the whole child. The notion of developing the whole child was used over 100 hundred years ago by Dr. Montessori. She purported a prepared environment was paramount in developing the authentic nature of a child; a child with various needs dependent upon developmental age. The intentions behind Montessori education were to create a child who had balanced emotions and desired to use his or her educational passion to contribute to a more peaceful world.

Undertaking a study of guide's decision-making in the Montessori prepared environment would provide novel insight on how guides prepared to put the child and the environment first thought and acted in reference to practices supportive of the whole child. The underlying assumption was lower elementary Montessori guides had more opportunities to make decisions of care, potentially inclusive of tenets of culturally responsive teaching, given Montessori education was directed toward the betterment of the whole child in a world capable of peace.

Making sense of how lower elementary Montessori guides met the developmental needs of the whole child was a complicated task. There were layers of knowledge informing how the guides' made decisions about the child's developmental readiness. This study did not intend to develop a model for how large numbers of Montessori guides made decisions, on the contrary it closely examined what defining characteristics operated in the decision-making of two veteran lower elementary Montessori AMI trained guides. My goal was to tell you a story about two lower elementary Montessori guides at one private school dedicated to the preservation of Dr. Montessori's word and living practice, as supported by AMI, the foundation established by Montessori in 1929.

As a qualitative researcher I sought to tell a story about how two lower elementary Montessori guides made curricular decisions supportive of the development of the whole child. I made sense of guide acts and decisions, knowing that fully understanding another's thoughts and actions was an impossible task. In this investigation, I did not attempt to code and sort every curricular decision made. Rather, I intended to look for patterns of decision-making supportive of the authentic nature of the

whole child. I operationalized the defining characteristics of how Montessori guides made decisions. The observed and reported decisions were then explored and juxtaposed to the theoretical frameworks of care (Noddings, 1992) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002).

In the next chapter, I review the research literature in three (3) major areas: (1) Montessori education; (2) teacher decision-making; and (3) decisions of care and culturally responsive teaching. I begin with an abridged overview of Montessori's view on education. Next, I discuss past and recent research within the Montessori paradigm and its impact on the academic education discourse. After I explore the teacher decision-making literature for models that elementary teachers have accessed and applied to make curricular decisions. Then, I synthesize and report research findings on the impact care and culturally responsive teaching has had on student achievement. I conclude Chapter 2 with an overview of challenges associated with making curricular decisions of care and culturally responsive teaching within a public school setting as well as how research in a Montessori setting provides further insight into the components of care and culturally responsive teaching. Chapter 3 details the qualitative case study methodology and methods for data generation and analysis employed in this study.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 reveal the findings or emerging themes from this qualitative case study. Specifically, chapter 4 tells River Montessori's story. This chapter opens with a vignette rich in detail about the physical space of the school. Also in chapter 4 I report River Montessori's ideology as told by Jerry, the Elementary Coordinator and Deb, the Founder.

Chapter 5 answers question one: what defining characteristics operate in the decision-making of lower elementary Montessori guides? Chapter 6 answers question two: how is care and cultural responsiveness understood and approached in the decision-making of guides? Again the data reported emerged from the onsite observations, interviews, stimulated recall sessions, and the collection of school documents and resources. I developed the names for the themes based on the story Luke and Evan told me about their decision-making in relation to the child, the environment, and the curriculum.

Chapter 7 is the conclusions and implications chapter. In this chapter I revisit the two questions guiding this study in relation to the existing literature on teacher decision-making and culturally responsive teaching. I then suggest additional questions to explore in future research.

Chapter II: Review of Relevant Literature

In Montessori's (1965) book *Spontaneous Activity in Education* she credited the Montessori guide with the formation of the child's mind. Montessori (1965) stated, "It is the teacher who must form the pupil; the development of the child's intelligence and culture are in his hands" (p. 30). Montessori guides were trained to know, understand, and apply the Montessori method through the creation of albums, the practicing of lessons, and observations and interactions with well-functioning Montessori classrooms (Cossentino, 2009). Guides were trained to observe each child for his or her emerging developmental needs. Once the guide understood what each child needed it was his or her job to invite the child to connect with works correlated with their needs within the prepared environment. The teacher was at the periphery, while the student was placed at the center of practice. The Montessori approach expected its guides to know the disciplines of psychology, physical phenomena, the laws governing memory, the means by which ideas are formed, and how ideas translated into action thereby producing a child with moral and intellectual judgment and reason (Montessori, 1917/1964).

Montessori's first theoretical stance was the need for discipline. The Montessori guide was responsible for creating moral character through discipline. According to Montessori, discipline allowed the class and the guide to reach their full growth potential. Discipline within a Montessori space included using positive guidance verbalizations, coupled with creative experiences, substituting a more positive form of expression with

the existing negative one (Goertz, 2001). In Montessori schools, “Discipline is reached always by indirect means. The end is obtained not by attacking the mistake and fighting it, but by developing activity in spontaneous work” (Montessori, 1917/1964, p. 350).

In Goertz’s (2001) book *Children Who Are Not Yet Peaceful: Preventing Exclusion in the Early Elementary Classroom* she interpreted and applied Montessori’s theory of discipline within her lower elementary Montessori classroom and reported the outcomes within reflective vignettes. This work represented how one Montessori guide made decisions and responded to behavior issues within a lower elementary Montessori prepared environment. The stories in this book showcased how Donna (the elementary guide) chose positive, selective word choice to diffuse children’s disruptive tendencies. One child in particular, Herzog, she named “a magnificent web of mess.” He was a young boy of five and a half years who had been accused of always making a mess. Herzog would wipe the shelves clear of materials and refuse to help pick them up. The children approached him with kindness, offering to assist him, but he wanted nothing to do with cleaning and resorted to yelling instead. Donna approached Herzog with these words:

You know Herzog. You could make a magnificent mess any time you felt like it. It would be bigger and more beautiful than these messes, and everyone could come and admire your mess. It could be fun. And we would help you clean it up afterwards. Come tell me the next time you feel like making a mess. (Goertz, 2001, p. 27)

Herzog came to her later that week. Donna brought him to an open space and allowed him to throw colored yarn balls in the air until he satisfied this need to make a mess. The children then admired his mess, and they helped Herzog clean it up. The selective

language used by Goertz (2001), is referred to in the Early Childhood literature as “positive guidance,” or responsive language, as opposed to restrictive language. Stone (1993) reported teachers who used responsive language had a positive approach to discipline, as opposed to a negative one. Teachers who used positive guidance offered children choices to satisfy their negative behavior, instead of solitary punishment and a thoughtless apology.

In addition to discipline, Montessori believed that the intellectual development of the child was organized around external stimuli, or hands on implements she referred to as didactic materials (Montessori, 1965). A Montessori environment motivated the child to act with regard to his or her internal needs. For Montessori insiders the environment was referred to as the prepared environment, an environment that allowed the authentic nature of the child to interact with tools and equipment specifically designed to teach intellectual concepts. This prepared environment provided the child with structure and order. It allowed the child to initiate work available to him. There were also opportunities for the guide to observe the child and offer him the proper nourishment to grow. That nourishment may be associated with any aspect of the child’s growth: social, emotional, or academic. The Montessori guide chose each child’s curricular agenda separately. The guide did not prepare lessons for everyone at the same time. Most of the time the guide presented lessons individually or in small groups.

Lillard (1972) organized Montessori’s methodology into 6 main tenets: (1) freedom with responsibility; (2) structure and order; (3) reality and nature; (4) beauty and atmosphere; (5) the Montessori didactic materials; and (6) the development of

community. All six tenets addressed the child and the environment including the operational structures within the Montessori environment. Lillard's six Montessori tenets were further defined as:

- 1) Freedom with responsibility: The child's inner guide was allowed to direct his or her growth.
- 2) Structure and order: The child learned to trust the environment and how to interact with it in a positive way. This ensured purposeful activity.
- 3) Reality and nature: The child internalized the limits of nature and reality, which helped the child become an acute and appreciative observer of life.
- 4) Beauty and atmosphere: Beauty was based on simplicity. Everything within the environment was of good design and quality. It was also attractively displayed.
- 5) The Montessori didactic materials: These materials provided the child with stimuli that captured his or her attention and initiated the process of concentration.
- 6) The development of community: The children took ownership and responsibility for the environment. They had compassion for one another and developed positive social relationships with children of various ages.

Montessori chose to position learning within a free environment, free from obstacles. She argued the child's environment should be different from the adult's environment. Children were free to move about the space and interact with items and furniture that were child-sized. Montessori asserted the learning environment, rather than the child, required adjustment. This approach was noted in the Montessori literature as "following the child" (Montessori, 1960/1966). Freedom was achieved as a result of the harmonious interaction of all six components of the environment. Without structure and order, reality and nature, beauty and atmosphere, the Montessori materials, and community life, the ability to make free choices was not possible.

Montessori desired for all of society to be aware of the power of the environment and its influence on the child's intellectual development. She stated:

...It is the child alone that can reveal the plan that is natural to man. But because of its delicate condition, like that of all incipient beings, the psychic life of the child needs to be protected and to be surrounded by an environment that could be compared with the wrappings placed by nature about the physical embryo. (Montessori, 1960/1966, p. 25)

Montessori's comparison between the environment for the child acting like the wrapping placed by nature about the physical embryo reified her attention was directed at the environment first. The environment was the place where the child interacted and it was in this place that the child had interactions conducive to his developmental needs.

In terms of curriculum, didactic materials were one of the six main tenets necessary for a Montessori classroom. These materials were initially developed and designed by Montessori allowing students to perform work aligned with the student's developmental and intellectual needs. These materials were designed to contain elements of control for error allowing the child a way to self-regulate and solve his or her own problems with the work (Seldin & Epstein, 2003). One system of control was the use of control charts. Montessori designed control charts for children to use when they had reached a stopping point with their work. Like an answer sheet for a test, they contained the answer and not the process behind how to solve the problem.

Mastery was not assumed from these child-centered, self-check charts. Ultimately, the guide determined when a child was productively working with the didactic materials and when he or she needed another lesson to grasp the concept of study. The guide watched how the child interacted with the materials of the curriculum in order to evaluate his or her level of mastery of the concepts under review. This observation of the child served as an assessment of the child's understanding, which

prompted the Montessori guide to reteach the concepts or move onto the next lesson in the series.

Montessori schools across the globe continue to use didactic materials. Some didactic materials are replicas of tools originally developed by Montessori. While some are designed and developed by Montessori manufacturing plants, in some instances practicing Montessori guides develop others. Montessori encouraged experimentation with the design of didactic material, not in the delivery of the lesson itself (Montessori, 1917/1964). Montessori insiders confirmed that Montessori lessons were heavily scripted, especially for the new Montessori guide (Cossentino, 2009). As the guide practiced the key lessons the guide improved his understanding of the concepts of study and was then able to improvise based on situational circumstances. Montessori encouraged guides to make decisions based on the observation of the children in his or her presence. She presented tools to children and at times removed them for various reasons associated with lack of appeal. The expectation was each didactic material introduced, new or old, engaged the child's hand and mind, and allowed the child to address his or her intellectual needs at that time. Within the Montessori environment the guide made decisions about the individual needs of children and the opportunities they required practice with in order to grow and develop.

The guide was trained to know not only what Shulman (1986) and others referred to as pedagogical content knowledge, but also the most appropriate and relevant tool needed to help the child experience and practice the skill or concept embodied within this knowledge. Montessori supported a guide-constructed curriculum (Montessori,

1917/1964). She did not develop a tangible, printed curriculum to be passed out to Montessori trainees. Instead, Montessori training was delivered as an oral tradition transcribed by the trainees, which was later approved by the trainers (Cossentino, 2009). Some Montessori organizations have developed manuals of the key lessons for purchase, while other Montessori organizations are true to tradition. Currently, the organization devoted to the advancement of authentic Montessori education, Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), does not include a curriculum in its Montessori training program. Rather, it requires the guide develop his or her own curriculum, or albums during the training process.

The Montessori method (2004) uses scripted language to present concepts. This scripted language was collected and recorded by the guide from the AMI trainer engaging with the didactic materials teaching the lesson as he or she would to a child. The Montessori trainee engaged in a visceral experience where the trainer modeled how to introduce, explore, and conclude the lesson. The argument made by Montessori was a lesson should be “concise, simplistic, and objective” (p. 124). Her expression of what a lesson should be was interpreted as a key lesson for the lower elementary child and a three period lesson, for the primary child: (1) first period; (2) second period; and (3) third period lesson. The three period lesson was expressed as: (1) This is; (2) Show me; and (3) What is (Seldin & Epstein, 2003), while the key lesson was told in story format. When a primary Montessori child was taught to distinguish between three different primary colors the guide presented the lesson using the above structure. “This is blue.” Then the guide mixed the blue color pallet amongst the two remaining primary colors:

red, and yellow. Next, the guide said, “Show me blue”. The child pointed to the blue colored pallet. Lastly, the guide said, “What is this?” pointing to the blue colored pallet, waiting for the student to name the color of study.

The Montessori literature named the student as the child and the teacher as the guide. An authentic Montessori experience understood and practiced Dr. Montessori’s developmental theory of the whole child including how best to support the development of the child in relation to the prepared environment. Dr. Montessori placed the guide in charge of preparing a stimulating environment, free of obstacles and emblematic of Lillard’s six main tenets. It was important to note that the guide was at the periphery. The guide observed and then acted in relation to individual’s needs, not the group as a whole.

The Elementary Montessori Classroom

According to Montessori (1965) a turning toward the intellectual and moral sides of life occurred at the age of seven. She argued children of elementary age were traveling from concrete experiences to the more abstract thinking, imagery, and story telling. From birth until seven years the child was classifying and absorbing his or her external world by stimulating the five senses. At the age of seven the child entered deeper into the psyche asking questions related to morality, and the judgment of actions as bad or good.

Children developed a sense of justice at this level. Montessori referred to this justice as distributive justice, “equality for all, as much as the distribution of punishments as of rewards” (p. 12). From age seven to age twelve the goal of Montessori education was to provide the child with culture and enlarge his or her social experiences. The elementary child had fulfilled his need for order and could distinguish simple concepts. Now the child awaited the assistance of the guide into another level of experience and mental fortitude.

Lillard’s (1996) review of Montessori education reported the elementary years as the second plane of formation. According to Lillard, the second plan of formation began at age six, not age seven, and ended at twelve years of age. She offered a slight alteration of language from Montessori’s explanation. Lillard reported Montessori’s goal in the second plane of formation was to support the child’s inner psyche now in need of experiences associated with social development and a deeper understanding of how the curriculum related to history, the present world, and the child’s future.

Montessori referred to the elementary years as the “intellectual period.” During this plane the child’s intellectual curiosity was limitless and their ability to produce effort and concentration toward the work was high. According to Lillard (1996):

The children’s appetite for knowledge [during the second plane] was immense. The child was no longer satisfied with bits and pieces of isolated information...they wanted to grasp the whole of knowledge (p. 45-6).

Montessori Education in the Research Literature

The following section explores the academic literature on Montessori education. This scholarship included research in the tradition of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Some of this work positioned Montessori education at the periphery of the study, while others placed Montessori education at the center of analysis. Four (4) themes emerged from this Montessori literature review: (1) using Montessori methodology with children and adults diagnosed with learning and behavior challenges; (2) examining existing tenets in the Montessori prepared environment; (3) comparing students' academic achievement in Montessori environments and public school environments; and (4) interpreting and implementing Montessori methods in public Montessori school contexts.

Using Montessori Methodology with Children and Adults Diagnosed with Learning and Behavior Challenges

There was a persistent presence of Montessori research with special education students (Glitter, 1967; Pickering, 1992; Sarimski, 1999). Scholars observed children with various physical, emotional, and learning challenges as they interacted with the Montessori didactic materials. Then they judged whether or not these children developed

skills and competencies more rapidly when using Montessori's method of instructional support. In this research the special education teacher actively made decisions about a child's developmental need and chose a didactic material to fulfill the observed need. Overall results showed at-risk children benefitted from the structure, the procedures, and the Montessori curriculum.

There was also a significant amount of research that used the Montessori didactic materials and approach to learning with elderly patients suffering from dementia (Camp & Skrajner, 2004; Giroux, Robichaud, & Paradis 2010; Lin, Huang, Su, Watson, Tsai, & Wu 2010; Mahendra, Hopper, Caules, Azuma, Cleary, & Kim 2006; Orsulic-Jeras, Schneider, & Camp, 2000; van Rijn, van Hoof, & Stappers 2010). What these researchers noticed was like children with special needs, elderly with special needs improved their quality of life through the intentional use of Montessori materials and methods. This caregiver role was similar to that of a Montessori guide. The caregiver was responsible for observing the elderly person or people in his or her care and making decisions of which didactic materials to give to the adult based on his or her unique needs. The overall finding was when the materials chosen by the caregiver corresponded to the needs and abilities of the elderly adult with dementia, positive behavioral effects were observed.

Examining Existing Tenets in the Montessori Prepared Environment

In the academic literature on Montessori education researchers examined elements of the Montessori curriculum, specifically the philosophical beliefs that comprised the philosophy and the role of the Montessori teacher as a guide. One angle of particular interest was comparing Montessori tenets to cognitive science research. Angeline Lillard suggested Montessori tenets aligned with modern research in psychology in her 2005 book entitled, *The Science Behind The Genius*. In this book Lillard proclaimed the “Montessori system is much more suited to how children learn and develop than the traditional [school] system is” (Lillard, 2005, p. 3). She then revealed eight Montessori insights supportive of effective cognitive teaching and learning. The eight insights in her 2005 book were:

- 1) Movement and cognition were closely entwined, and movement enhanced the child’s ability to think and acquire knowledge.
- 2) Learning and well-being were improved when people had a sense of control or volition over their lives.
- 3) People learned better when they were interested in what they were learning.
- 4) Tying extrinsic rewards to an activity negatively impacted motivation and engagement in that activity when the reward was withdrawn.
- 5) Collaborative arrangements were conducive to learning.
- 6) Learning situated in meaningful contexts was often deeper and richer than learning in abstract contexts.
- 7) Particular forms of adult interaction were associated with more optimal child outcomes.
- 8) Order in the environment was beneficial to children.

Lillard (2005) argued for a transformative shift in how education should be approached in traditional schooling. This transformative shift included rejecting the notion that schooling was efficient (much like a factory) (Kliebard 2004; Marshall, Sears, & Schubert, 2007) where the child was a blank slate (or knowledge recipient instead of participant and contributor) (Pinker, 2002) and knowledge was dumped into his or her head to be retrieved at a later date for a test.

Murray (2011) also explored the relationship between Montessori education and the literature on cognition, particularly research on motivation theory. According to Murray there were characteristics known to enhance motivation including: interest, competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Pintrich, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Seifert, 2004). He claimed these four characteristics directly aligned with the main tenets of Montessori education. In this article, Murray took each psychological need and juxtaposed it to a matching tenet of Montessori for each of the four characteristics: interest, competence, autonomy, and relatedness. According to Murray (2011), Montessori supported autonomy through her theoretical stance that children had freedom within limitations. A Montessori child's interest was valued as a tool for creating internalized student motivation. Paula Polk Lillard (1995) stated, "Interaction with the environment is most productive in terms of the individual's development when it is self-chosen and founded upon individual interest" (p. 3). Thus a Montessori guide made decisions on how to best prepare the environment in order to support autonomy and interest. This decision was also accomplished by creating a learning space characterized as simple, beautiful, and systematic (Lillard, 1995).

According to Murray (2011), the Montessori concept of competence was related to the characteristic confidence. Competence was fostered through the individualized curriculum, the 3-year age span of students in the Montessori classroom, and the evaluation process. These three tenets created a space where students felt successful and supported (Murray, 2011). The guide recognized students as individuals with specific developmental needs requiring individualized instruction. Thus, the guide made decisions based on observations of children and a rich understanding of the Montessori curriculum and didactic materials. In addition, the guide made decisions on how to selectively approach the evaluation of student work. Montessori desired for guides to speak to the process of learning, not the product (Montessori, 1973).

Lastly, Murray (2011) argued Montessori leveraged the power of elementary children's social tendencies as a means for fostering motivation. Montessori named this shift from "individual formation" to development as social beings as the "fundamental transition of children" (Lillard, 1996, p. 44). This appreciation for social development was seen in the following Montessori components: (1) the 3-year cycle in each classroom; (2) freedom to work in small groups; and (3) class meetings (Murray, 2011). The guide made decisions about how to create a community of learners with respect for one another, the environment, and all objects and materials in and outside of the classroom. Discipline was a necessary component of the Montessori learning space. Students had freedom to choose work and freedom to move about the classroom with purpose (Montessori, 1973). Students knew how to communicate their needs and challenges with others without the presence of the teacher.

Montessori education is available to children and families in 117 countries (Cossentino, 2008). Any method with over one hundred years of practice and international appeal attracts research attention. In this case, investigators were interested in what Montessori guides did and how their practices aligned with Montessori's theory and Montessori-based guide training courses. Cossentino (2005, 2006, 2009) explored guide rituals, the concept of work, and Montessori guide training. Nelson and DeLorenzo (2011) provided an outlet for a Montessori guide to name her decision-making processes for handling student misbehaviors and off-task behaviors.

In 2005, Cossentino explored the Montessori method as an outsider through classroom observations. She named particular events within the Montessori classroom as rituals and explained how these rituals aligned with reports about Montessori pedagogy and principles. Here, she revealed how Montessori guides used scripted, simple language with students to direct their activity in the classroom.

In 2006, Cossentino shifted her focus to the role of work in the Montessori classroom. She reported on how work in a Montessori space differed from the concept of work in a traditional classroom. Development in the Montessori classroom was "the child's work."

Work also serves as the bridge between development and pedagogy, with pedagogy providing the proper design of an environment within which to work as well as the protection of the child's concentration once work is underway. (Cossentino, 2006, p. 66)

Cossentino made connections between Montessori's concept of work and current understandings of play. She spent two years as a participant-observer in a toddler,

preschool, and elementary classroom. While there she focused on conversations that addressed the notion of work in these Montessori environments. She recorded speech events as they occurred naturally in each classroom. She noticed a pattern. All Montessori guides talked about the role of student activity. She also noted guides used limited word choice when interacting with students and they never interrupted children in the act of work. “Work belongs to the children; work is the focus of the classroom; work is revered” (Cossentino, 2006, p. 80).

In 2009, Cossentino explored Montessori guide training from a collection of two separate ethnographic studies of Montessori training courses. Her goal was to examine the conceptual puzzles that made Montessori training programs unique in order to provide insight for mainstream teacher educators. She asserted Montessori guide training encompassed both the hows and the whys of human development and required Montessori guides attend to the details of learning and teaching. She argued this kind of focus was lacking in mainstream teacher preparation, and until it was located, concepts like culture, craft, or coherence would do little to bring vitality to teacher education programs (Cossentino, 2009).

In 2011, Nelson and DeLorenzo explored teacher follow-through as it related to discipline and classroom harmony using a personal narrative of a Montessori classroom guide. From this personal reflection of a guide’s practice they suggested four (4) strategies for effective guide follow-through: (1) agreeing upon solutions or consequences with logic, respect, and helpfulness; (2) giving specific deadlines and consequences; (3) keeping comments very concise; and (4) responding to objections by

asking, “What was our agreement?” The authors summarized these suggestions with “Follow-through simply means acting upon what you said, without lectures, constant nagging, or punishment” (p. 37). The guide in this article made decisions to address students’ off-task behaviors in a personal, yet systematic way. Ultimately, the guide was clear and concise about what needed to be changed, how to go about changing it, and when.

Comparing Students’ Academic Achievement in Montessori Environments and Public School Environments

In the last decade comparative studies of Montessori classrooms and traditional classrooms have been popular. In particular, social scientists were interested in exploring if Montessori classrooms provided more opportunities for flow (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005), creativity (Besancon & Lubart, 2008), and self-regulation (Ervine, Walsh, & Mecca, 2010). These comparative studies investigated student achievement outcomes of traditional and alternative schooling (Dohrmann, Nishida, Lipsky, & Grimm, 2007; Lopata, Wallace, & Finn, 2005) and whether school environment impacted one’s GPA in higher education (Shankland, Genolini, França, 2010). The hope was to gain insight as to which environment was best for student learning outcomes now and later in life.

In 2005, Rathunde and Csikszentmihalyi explored issues of developmental fit and young adolescents' quality of experience and motivation by comparing five Montessori middle schools to six 'traditional' public middle schools. They investigated these issues using Csikszentmihalyi's Experience Sampling Method (ESM). Students used this method to respond to a watch programmed to buzz the students approximately 8 times per day for 7 consecutive days. Students responded to these buzzes by filling out a short response form. Two items from the ESM strategy were selected for analysis: Where were you as you were beeped, and what was the main thing that you were doing? The hypothesis was that Montessori students would report more intrinsic motivation and a higher quality of experience while academically engaged at school.

Findings revealed that while engaged in academic work at school, Montessori students did report higher affect, potency (feeling alert and energetic), intrinsic motivation (enjoyment, interest), and flow experience than students from traditional middle schools (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005). However, the traditional students reported higher salience (perceptions of importance for their futures). In addition, Montessori students spent approximately three and a half hours more per week than traditional students doing schoolwork they felt was interesting and important.

Besancon and Lubart (2008) were interested in differences in the development of creative competencies in children schooled in diverse learning environments. Here, creativity was defined as "the ability to produce novel, original work that meets contextual constraints" (p. 381). They hypothesized that children schooled in alternative schools, Montessori and Freinet, would have greater creative performance than children

schooled in traditional schools.¹ Two hundred-eleven children participated in this study over the course of two years: 40 Montessori students, 51 Freinet students, 67 traditional students from Paris, and 52 traditional students from a suburb of Paris. The children were in grades one through four during year one of the study and grades two through five during year two of the study. Researchers used two types of prompts that corresponded to divergent and integrative thinking, respectively with students. They observed that children in a Montessori school showed generally higher creative performance than children in traditional pedagogy. Grade level and gender also influenced creativity. In general, performance decreased from the first year to the second year and girls creative performance scores tended to be higher than boys (Besancon & Lubart, 2008). A possible reason noted for why more creative students were found in the Montessori school was that Montessori pedagogy used different types of exercises, which developed divergent thinking, an important component of creative thinking. The authors also mentioned creative performance varied based on the student's teacher. In particular, traditional and Freinet schools did not have the same teacher from year to year, but a Montessori guide remained with his or her students for a three-year cycle.

Ervin et al. (2010) performed a three-year mixed methods study comparing self-regulation in Montessori and non-Montessori classrooms. The subjects for this study were a cohort group of K, 1st, and 2nd grade students from three public school districts, and one independent Montessori school. In total 127 children in Montessori and 129

¹ Freinet pedagogy was founded on two principles: (1) vital boost (a child was an inspired, dynamic individual who should not be constrained); and (2) experimental fluctuation (error was a means to access

children in non-Montessori classrooms were compared. Thirty-three guides and teachers and over 200 parents were included in the study. Results from the study revealed that

Montessori children:

- 1) Needed less supervision;
- 2) Were more likely to exhibit feelings of happiness and contentment;
- 3) Were more likely to be proactive in using problem solving strategies when engaged in cognitive tasks;
- 4) Monitored their own learning for correctness;
- 5) Inquired, asked questions, and sought out information when the task was not fully understood;
- 6) Developed internal standards of performance;
- 7) Recognized academic areas in which they performed well and reacted positively to them;
- 8) Recognized the good work of peers and used knowledge for self-judgment of their own performance;
- 9) And Montessori children were enthusiastic and curious learners.

This research study found Montessori children had a higher level of self-regulation and more consistent growth in self-regulation skills, over a 3-year period, than non-Montessori children (Ervin et al., 2010). It also revealed an association between how well children internalized self-regulation and academic success. The researcher represented this finding as follows, “The positive results for Montessori children in rating of self-regulation and academic performance affirm the effectiveness of Montessori classroom practice in fostering positive work habits and internal motivation” (p. 30).

In contrast, Lopata et al. (2005) compared academic achievement between Montessori and traditional education programs. Four public schools were selected to participate: Montessori, open magnet, structured magnet, and traditional non-magnet. The fourth grade results revealed no significant difference on mathematics achievement

knowledge) (Besancon and Lubart, 2008, p. 382).

between Montessori and structured magnet schools, but Montessori mathematics achievement was higher than open magnet schools. In contrast, Montessori students had a significantly lower math achievement than traditional non-magnet students. The eighth grade results revealed Montessori students had significantly lower language arts achievement than students attending both the structured magnet and the traditional non-magnet schools (Lopata et al., 2005). Thus research existed that showcased negative outcomes of Montessori education.

Dohrmann et al. (2007) assessed high school outcomes of 53 children who had previously attended two different public Montessori programs from preschool through the 5th grade. They obtained high school records and transcripts to find measures for comparison between two groups: (1) students of public Montessori programs; and (2) a modified control group demographically identical to the Montessori group. Overall, the children who attended Montessori elementary schools scored higher on high school standardized math and science tests than their peers who attended traditional schools. However, there was no significant difference between Montessori and non-Montessori students on GPA and standardized tests of English and the Social Studies (Dohrmann et al., 2007).

Shankland et al. (2010) studied student adjustment to higher education. They investigated the role of alternative educational pathways on coping with the demands of student life as a freshman in college. They compared 50 students from alternative schools (Steiner, Montessori, and New Schools) with 80 students from a traditional school system. They hypothesized students from alternative schools would adapt better

to the demands of college because of greater perceived social supports, academic self-efficacy, and task-oriented coping styles. Data was collected for each student once at the end of his or her high school experience and twice as a freshman in college (first and last semester). The results of this study showed students from alternative schools adjusted better to the demands of higher education. These students reported less anxiety and depression symptoms, and they showed greater quality of life satisfaction and academic achievement.

Interpreting and Implementing Montessori Methods in Public Montessori School Contexts

With increasing numbers of public Montessori schools there is a need for teachers to interpret multiple contrasting school scripts. Blank (2009) explored how two public school Montessori teachers, one preschool and one lower elementary, made sense of multiple school scripts including the Montessori script, demands from NCLB legislation, and public school expectations. Her research question was “What is the relationship between teachers’ notions about teaching and school micro-cultures?” The results from her qualitative case study indicated public Montessori teachers were faced with dilemmas, but managed to make decisions supportive of all the above scripts present at the school.

Blank (2009) suggested each teacher made decisions within these conflicting scripts using either accommodation strategies or discrimination strategies. Accommodation included prioritizing commitments and looking for ways to modify contradicting scripts so they shared some characteristics with the Montessori script. Some scripts were unable to be accommodated, thus each teacher recognized this and labeled specific times of the day “Montessori-free” (p. 256). For example, the district required an hour of reading instruction where the teacher taught whole group reading lessons using the basal reader. The elementary teacher understood this satisfied the NCLB script and she adjusted her thinking by noting how it was different than the Montessori script, but such a time was not optional. Blank concluded the study by recognizing how teachers operating within school structures with several scripts had a complicated task with opportunities for teachers to make important decisions leading teachers to “greater and greater sophistication in practice” (p. 257).

Montessori education was a topic of interest for researchers from many disciplines, especially education, developmental psychology, and cognitive psychology. All but one study showcased above had positive compliments for Montessori education and its main tenets, implying that Montessori education had something positive to offer to the teaching and curriculum discourse. Simultaneously, this review highlighted the lack of attention paid specifically to how Montessori guides actually made decisions in their practice, especially around issues of care and culture. While culture was mentioned above as an important component of Montessori education, the guide and her or his decision-making was not the focal point of the research reported. This study addresses

this gap in the research. It specifically focused on the decision-making of two Montessori guides in an AMI lower elementary Montessori classroom.

Teacher as Decision-Maker

Boote (2006) referred to teachers as street-level bureaucrats who decide:

What is taught, how (and if) it will be modulated to meet diverse learning needs, how to maintain a productive learning environment, and how to deal with the myriad unexpected events that provide the texture of classroom life (p. 462).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children's mission statement on developmentally appropriate practice asserts:

Expert decision-making lies at the heart of effective teaching...Children benefit most from teachers who have the skills, knowledge, and judgment to make good decisions and are given the opportunity to use them. (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 5)

Both portrayed teachers as decision makers with the power to make a positive difference in the learning potential of a child.

Jackson's classic work, *Life in Classrooms*, (1968), was one of the first studies that investigated teaching as a decision-making profession. His work revealed that indeed teacher's make many decisions throughout the day regarding more than just the curriculum. Not only were they making decisions, they were reflective and actively questioning these decisions. "Teacher's grapple with whether they make a just choice, whether they were sensitive or insensitive, consistent or inconsistent, especially when handling social dynamics" (1968, p. 167). After Jackson, other scholars (Boote, 2006;

Calderhead, 1987; Kennedy, 2005; Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007) continued asking questions about how teachers' made decisions and if teacher decision-making led to a better understanding of the behaviors and thoughts of high-quality teachers and teaching.

Interest in how teacher's thought and made decisions strengthened with the support of cognitive science. In Bandura's (1977) *Social Learning Theory*, intelligence shifted from a biological predisposition to a construct determined by will and access to optimal learning environments. Intelligence was no longer something you just had, it was something you could get better at when conditions were optimal. Researchers gravitated to classrooms in search of exploring how teacher's thought and made decisions on a daily basis. School classrooms were laboratories for understanding more about the biological and environmental stimuli necessary for optimal learning experiences. Intelligence was now a dynamic enterprise, and the role of the teacher was to provide optimal learning experiences for students.

If intelligence was acquired from interactions between persons and situations, then instruction should be concerned with vicarious learning experiences, symbolism, self-regulatory capacities, and reflection (Bandura, 1977). The notion was that people learn from observing, or watching, as well as doing. The assumption was that students' acquired knowledge by watching a teacher model, or demonstrate, a skill or concept. In the 1970s, the best models for learning were identified as "exemplary," defined as explicitly teaching competencies in performative ways. Teacher modeling became the instructional strategy used to give students emotionally charged vicarious learning

experiences, through symbolic representation. The role of the teacher here was to make decisions on how to represent and model the experiences believed to be optimal for learning, which allowed students to invest in and connect to the learning performance.

In order to determine the ways in which teachers' thought about learning researchers interviewed and observed teachers while teaching and showcased specific teacher behaviors associated with more successful classroom teaching. A particular emphasis of research highlighted how teachers thought about pedagogical decision-making in the teaching profession (Boote, 2006; Calderhead, 1987; Shavelson & Stern, 1981), while other research focused on teaching behaviors or actions associated with higher quality student outcomes (Cunningham & Allington, 2007; Johnston, 2004; Shulman, 1986). Teachers also made decisions about how to create a more meaningful learning environment (Gay, 2000; 2002; Montessori, 1917/1964; 1965; 1973; Noddings, 1992).

In their review, Shavelson and Stern (1981) reported two assumptions operating within research on how teachers thought and made decisions: (1) teachers are viewed as "rational professionals" who judged and made decisions within a complex, dynamic environment; and (2) teachers' cognition was a legitimate area of study. In order to understand the behaviors of teachers, researchers must "know their goals, the nature of the task environment confronting them, their information processing capabilities, and the relationship between these elements" (1981, p. 461). Research methods for collecting data on mental processes included:

- Policy Capturing: hypothetical situation where teachers made judgments based on student characteristics.
- Lens Modeling: teachers predicted students' preferences, which were compared to students' actual preference.
- Process Tracing: teachers asked to think aloud while performing a task.
- Stimulated Recall: researcher recorded the lesson. After the lesson the teacher filled in the mental activities that accompanied the chosen behaviors (assumed teachers were willing and able to articulate their thought processes).
- Case Study: a narrative account of an object of social inquiry such as a classroom.
- Ethnography: a narrative study of a bounded system in its cultural context. (1981, p. 458-59)

A finding from this review was teachers often did not follow a traditional model of instructional design: objectives, step-by-step procedures, and evaluation of effectiveness. Instead, what Shavelson and Stern (1981) noticed was teachers primarily attended to the activities or the content and materials the students were handling to experience the objectives of the lesson. Thus, upon concluding the review they suggested focusing research on how teachers made decisions and judgments when planning and performing instructional activities. "Research should examine how teachers communicate subject matter structure and the manner in which they do so" (Shavelson & Stern, 1981, p. 491).

In Calderhead's (1987) review, education scholars discussed teaching as a professional activity that required: (1) possessing a body of specialized knowledge acquired through training and experience; (2) orienting their professional goals in relation to their clients; and (3) often dealing with problems that were complex and ambiguous, where teachers used their expert knowledge to analyze, interpret, judge, and make decisions that ultimately benefitted their clients. A professional teacher possessed informed knowledge to address active classroom life, making decisions on a daily basis that involved skillful action.

The role of a teacher was to manage dilemmas effectively using a host of personal, professional, and experiential knowledge known in the literature as “personal practical knowledge” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), “craft knowledge” (Zeichner, Tabachnick, & Desmore, 1987 from Calderhead), or “strategic knowledge” (Shulman, 1986). The professional duties of a teacher required impeccable judgment and adaptable strategies for addressing situational circumstances. Such autonomous decision-making, at times, conflicted with highly regulated, accountability-driven environments.

Accountability structures are ever present in a public school environment requiring teachers to make decisions and act with such mandates in mind. Researchers have gravitated to understanding how teachers are handling the pressures from above and how these pressures affected the choices they made in their classroom instruction. For instance, Sleeter and Stillman (2007) studied ten experienced elementary and middle school teachers’ responses to accountability reform in a low-performing California public school. The findings of this research revealed teachers used their expertise to make decisions about which standards to emphasize and which to skip altogether. This report revealed teachers made curricular choices about what to teach, even within a planned curriculum. Similar findings were garnered from a study of 45 elementary public school teachers with various levels of experience (Kennedy, 2005). The teachers in this study reported they made decisions about what and how to teach, not only as a result of institutional guidelines and scripted curricula, but also as a result of their own personal beliefs and values. Data collected in these two studies revealed teachers continue to have pedagogical power in their classrooms, regardless of the pressures from above. They

have the ability to make decisions about what and how to teach even within highly structured public school environments.

All teachers make decisions that impact the future learning potential of their students every day. In Sleeter, Stillman, and Kennedy's studies teachers made curricular decisions about the instructional plan and process. They decided what content was taught in what way, picking and choosing which standards to address and which to leave out. Implying that research on how teachers think and make decisions on a daily basis about instruction and issues was a worthwhile endeavor with the potential to greatly improve how teachers instructed and supervised new and continuing teachers. This moves us into the next level of teacher decision-making, decisions made within an active elementary classroom: How were teachers using their pedagogical power to instruct students and create an optimal learning experience?

Elementary Teachers: Cognitive Models of Teachers' Instructional Decision-Making

Scholars developed cognitive models to help explain how teachers make decisions in their classrooms (Hunter, 1994; Riner 2000; Tyler, 1949). Cognitive models identified the components of the teacher decision-making process, with the goal of alleviating predictable challenges in teacher decision-making through the development of a clear schema for thinking about students, the curriculum, and the classroom. Given the

complexities of being a classroom teacher, it was assumed that such a schema would assist teachers when making appropriate, timely decisions.

Cognitive models of teaching, summarized below, all addressed how a prepared teacher, with an instructional plan, and the means to execute and deliver the plan, presumably had more classroom successes with better student academic performance (Hunter, 1994; Pang, 2001; Riner, 2000; Tyler, 1949). Each model purported giving the teacher the schemata he or she needed to make quality classroom decisions.

According to Tyler (1949), objectives guided all curricular choices including the selection of materials, content, instructional procedures, tests, and exams. In addition, subject matter specialists selected educational objectives. Thus, teacher decision-making in the 1950's context involved a teacher making decisions based off of the subject matter decisions made by the subject matter specialists. Subject matter specialists decided what behavior patterns were socially and personally selected as the learning expectation, including what skills and abilities were taught. The curricular expectation was for teachers to teach what matters now, building up the faculties of the mind, in general, in order to prepare the mind to think and act for a lifetime.

This notion of thinking was conceived of as: (1) sensing a difficulty; (2) identifying the problem; (3) collecting relevant facts; (4) formulating hypotheses; (5) testing hypotheses; and (6) drawing conclusions (Tyler, 1949). Increasing the faculties of the mind translated into educational experience for the child or student promoting the need to allow students to apply what they learned to new situations. This application of knowledge was spoken of as “the experience” (p. 63) with “learning take[ing] place

through the experiences which the learner has; that is through the reactions he makes to the environment in which he is placed" (p. 63).

Thus, for Tyler (1949), teachers were responsible for creating the proper learning environment for students to act within. Indeed, "it is what he does that he learns, not what the teachers does" (Tyler, 1949, p. 63). Teachers structured the environment to produce desired types of reactions. Determining which desired reactions to provide was guided by the intent to eliminate gaps observed in the present development of students. The quality of the experience was rated using the following criteria: relevancy, rigor, and context. Were the problems chosen real to students? Were they challenging? Did the teacher contextualize the problem—set-up the environment to represent contexts of when the problem of study naturally occurred? If the answer to these questions was yes, then it was assumed that the teacher had made quality decisions on how to implement the curriculum with his or her students.

Another theoretical model advanced how we understood teacher's plans and decisions—Taylor's (1970) model, which conceptualized instructional concerns into a four-step process:

1. The needs and abilities of students as perceived by the teacher.
2. The subject matter content to be taught.
3. The identified goals of instruction.
4. The method to be used with the students. (p. 40)

Taylor's model assumed that when teachers planned, the needs of their students were central to the decisions they make about methods and content.

Teachers used observation and negotiation to learn about the needs and abilities of their students. They watched them while they work. They watched them while they engaged in group discussions and when they were speaking to their peers. Teachers also saw the bigger picture. They knew their grade level subject matter content. They knew how to connect different subject matter content through a process called integration where teachers addressed objectives from different subject matter content in one lesson (Taylor, 1970).

Like Tyler (1949), Taylor (1970) purported the need for teachers to identify objectives, or the goals of instruction. What it was students would do to show they had met, exceeded, or failed to meet the given objective? Teachers made decisions to remove barriers preventing students from obtaining the skills and competencies of the lesson. Teachers also needed a strategy or method to use with students to meet the identified goals. What students looked like and sounded like during the lesson. Was the lesson teacher-directed or student-directed or some combination of the two? In 1970, most likely the teacher dominated the lesson with teacher talk. Today classroom environments work hard to provide more student-centered learning.

Another cognitive model used to address teacher decision-making in the elementary classroom was Yinger's (1978) theoretical model of teacher planning. The key components of this model included: (1) problem finding; (2) problem formulation or solution; and (3) implementation, evaluation, and routinization. Problem finding required the teacher to recognize when a problem had occurred. This required the ability to observe situations and notice unmet needs in the classroom. Next, the teacher dedicated

time to addressing the problem(s). Within this component the problem was redefined and refined; solutions were generated and tested mentally. The final decision-making process involved the implementation of the mental solution—putting the solution into action, and evaluating its effectiveness, then refining and reimplementing as necessary.

Madeline Hunter (1994) addressed how teachers made classroom decisions in her book entitled *Enhancing Teaching*. According to Hunter, the ideal teacher decision-making model: (1) emerged from the examination of research and from informed observations of successful classroom teaching; (2) incorporated psychological principles, as well as current cognitive research about the human brain; and (3) provided an organization schemata for planning, implementing, and analyzing decisions that affected both teaching and learning (p. 2). This teacher decision-making model placed the teacher at the center. Stating it was the teacher who made and implemented decisions in three categories in conjunction with students' needs: (1) choosing content (what was to be learned); (2) selecting learning behaviors (what students did to learn); and (3) implementing teaching behaviors (how teachers used the principles of learning to increase the probability of successful outcomes).

Hunter (1994) then discussed how teachers planned successful lessons using psychological principles in their teaching. There were seven basic elements considered in this design of effective lessons: (1) anticipatory set, which developed readiness to learn; (2) the instructional objective and its value to the learners; (3) the source and type of instructional input; (4) a model or example of the intended learning outcome; (5) a check for learners' understanding of the objective; (6) guided/monitored practice; and (7)

independent practice to help learners develop fluency and retain what was learned (p. 3). By breaking down teacher decision-making into seven steps Hunter simplified the decision-making process for classroom teachers. She saw these seven steps as a tool, which bridged the gap between theory and practice.

More recently, Riner (2000) addressed issues of teacher preparedness and its necessity for high-quality teacher decisions. She stated:

Teachers who establish learning goals related to a preplanned curriculum and who have a prepared plan with sequencing, materials, and varied instructional strategies to facilitate student understanding are more successful in improving student learning and performance. (p. 39)

This type of preparedness required teachers to think about the various temporal planes including the proactive, active, and reactive planes. Even with a plan and the tools to implement the plan, teachers were responsible for implementing creative activities that addressed both short-term and long-term goals, as well as group and individual student needs.

Cognitive models were created to understand how teachers made decisions in their classrooms related to subject matter content, pedagogy, the environment, and students. Models of how teachers made decisions enabled interested parties to connect to the judgments of a teacher and the reasoning behind why they do what they do. I argued Tyler's (1949), Taylor's (1970), Yinger's (1978), Hunter's (1994) and Riner's (2000) cognitive models on how teachers made decisions in the classroom were myopic and limited in scope. None of these cognitive models addressed issues of care and culturally responsive teaching, two theories of effective, inclusive, and socially just teaching

platforms that enjoy considerable prominence in the academic educational scholarship today.

It was likely that the models designed by the aforementioned scholars did not address care and culturally responsive teaching because it was a topic placed at the teaching and learning periphery at this time, thus it was viewed in relation to a specific, generally marginalized student population. In the last decade, Noddings (1992; 2005), Gay (2000; 2002), Ladson-Billings (1995), Nieto (2006), and Irvine (2002; 2003; 2010) all argue teachers' decisions take place within a cultural space, requiring teachers to make decisions that are inherently cultural.

Pang (2001) addressed care and culture in her model of how teachers made instructional decisions. Like other multicultural education scholars, Pang argued classrooms were diverse, containing children from various ethnic groups with unique beliefs and behaviors. Thus, a multicultural classroom required a teacher to think from the perspective of culture, which was for Pang, also inherently caring. The goal of this model was to get teachers thinking about, and making decisions that made the curriculum more culturally meaningful. According to Pang (2001) teachers:

- Incorporated the personal experience of students into the curriculum
- Used role models as a source of inspiration in the classroom
- Used culturally grounded stories and songs
- Used language and cultural expressions in daily talk and instruction
- Presented multiple perspectives on an issue, event, concept, or idea
- Integrated culture into the traditional content of the curriculum
- Integrated community issues into the curriculum
- Taught care and justice in the curriculum

Pang (2001) chose to make care and culture the underlying components of high-quality teacher decision-making. Pang supported the need for pedagogical changes for the children of today given the nation's diverse classroom composition. These changes moved beyond a superficial treatment of cultural knowledge (i.e., food, fun and festivals—Sleeter & Grant, 2007) and acknowledged and sought to transform traditional, normative official school knowledge while also helping students to succeed academically. This model also recognized and pushed back against societal and school injustices (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Teacher Decision-Making Around the Practices of Care and Culturally Responsive Teaching

In recent years new models of how teachers should think and make decisions about the curriculum showcase the need for teachers to use care (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Noddings, 1992; 2005; Riner, 2000) and culturally responsive approaches (Gay, 2000; 2002; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; 1995; Pang, 2001; Ware, 2002) as contexts for teaching. One argument for care in schools is American families are stressed and need caring teachers and community members to step up for the good of society (Riner, 2000). Another argument for care in the classroom is teaching is inherently about caring relationships (Gay, 2000; Noddings, 2005). Gay (2000) argued that drawing upon care in the classroom was fundamental to good teaching. She noted:

Teachers who genuinely care about students generate higher levels of all kinds of success than those who do not. They have high performance expectations and will settle for nothing less than high achievement. Failure is simply unacceptable to them, so they work diligently to see that success for students happens. (Gay, 2000, p. 47)

Ironically, however, as pointed out by Irvine (2003), little research attention has been given to helping teachers create “personalized, caring learning environments where personal bonds are formed with students” (p. 75).

Experts urge teachers to show care for all students by getting to know their ethnic backgrounds and personal lived histories (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Once teachers know who is represented in the classroom culturally, they can then inform themselves with culturally accurate texts for each cultural group represented in their classrooms. Knowledge of the history of a culture will allow for teacher-directed conversations of topics that are more culturally sensitive, including conversations of social justice. For example, a teacher could decide to include sensitive conversations of social justice by discussing the historical implications of race and one’s position in society with students (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; 2010). Such discourse opens students’ awareness to larger institutional structures operating in the United States and around the world and enables teachers to make better decisions to prepare and deliver a curriculum allowing more opportunities for students to connect to the content of study. Such discourse also encourages discourse around curricular inaccuracies, omissions, and stereotypes (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003).

In order to cultivate the kind of quality reciprocal relationships that facilitate these experiences, the dialogue between the teacher and the student must be open-ended, where

neither party knows at the outset what the outcome or decision in the interaction will be (Noddings, 1992). Open-ended communication was a large component of Freire's work on critical approaches to teaching. Freire (1970) believed that in order to relate and connect to others with care you have to pursue a common search for understanding, empathy, or appreciation. This valued interchange is thus, one of negotiation between the carer and the cared for. In this moment, the teacher plays the role of the carer and makes the decision to show care by listening attentively to student's needs, wants, and experiences in order to formulate timely, appropriate, and caring feedback.

According to Gay (2000) caring interpersonal relationships were also characterized by patience, persistence, facilitation, validation, and empowerment. Teachers enacting care made decisions to show it through concern for person and performance. This type of care was identified in the literature as action-provoking. It prompted effort and achievement from all students, making learning contingent on cultural inclusion and confirmation in the educational process. Gay reported:

African American students in Hanley's (1998) study of knowledge construction unanimously and enthusiastically declared that good teachers are respectful of them, care about them, provide choices, and are tenacious in their efforts to make the information taught more understandable for them. (Gay, 2000, p. 49)

Teachers who care have classroom affirmations supportive of high learning expectations for all students. A teacher with care "uses knowledge and strategic thinking to decide how to act in the best interests of others" (p. 45).

In a similar vein, Howard (2001) found that young students could easily articulate the cultivation of community, care, and affective communication experienced in

classrooms taught by culturally responsive teachers. Nieto (2006) recognized such classrooms as having teachers who hold “genuine respect for student identities—including their language and culture— as well as high expectations and great admiration for them” (p. 466). This, however, did not suggest that culturally responsive teachers approached their students in a static, essentialized manner. Rather, Nieto drew from her own research with teachers to highlight the important role improvisation played in teacher decision-making in the classroom. Recognizing improvisation as “being prepared for uncertainty, both the joy and the frustration of it” (p. 468). The teachers in her study reported the importance of capitalizing on teachable moments, which included knowing how and when to make decisions during instruction that helped students connect to the skill or concept of the lesson. Nowhere was this more important than in the context of language usage in the classroom.

Johnston (2004) addressed the power of language in teaching. He discussed the choice words successful teachers use in communicative negotiation. This work was grounded in a social constructivist perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), arguing the intellectual life of a classroom was greatly impacted by social choices and language usage. Thus, when choosing what kind of language to use to convey care to students the teacher made decisions based on the ongoing negotiation between the teacher and student. The teacher chose not only what language to use, but also how to deliver this language with care, specific to the child’s needs in this exchange. What Johnston (2004) noticed about successful classroom teachers was they made choices to “build emotionally and relationally healthy learning communities—intellectual environments that produce not

mere technical competence, but caring, secure, actively literate human beings” (p. 2).

This statement was confirmed by Vygotsky (1978) who recognized the importance of the adult-child relationship in the development of the child’s intellectual growth. The teacher was the entity with the power to make good communicative decisions. It was the teacher who modeled and established the language that was appropriate and acceptable for positive social relationships.

Positive social relationships extend into the larger community through opportunities to give one’s time to a social cause (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003). “The school must redouble its efforts at providing instruction and experiences for learning basic goodness and mutual respect necessary for responsible citizenship” (Riner, 2000, p. 120). For Gay (2000), “Caring binds individuals to their society, to their communities and to each other” (p. 45). This kind of caring was manifested by the teacher. The teacher decided to express concern for students’:

...Psychoemotional well-being and academic success, personal morality and social actions, obligations and celebrations, communality and individuality, and unique cultural connections and universal human bonds (p. 45-6).

According to Irvine (2003) teacher care came in many forms and manifested itself in different ways in different classroom spaces. African American teachers in particular, have been cited in the research as operating within a “warm-demander” pedagogic framework (Irvine, 2003; Kleinfeld, 1975; Vasquez, 1989; Ware, 2006). Kleinfeld (1975) first recognized teachers identified as warm-demanders as “committed, respectful, dedicated, and competent educators, who were not afraid, resentful, or hostile toward their pupils” (Irvine, 2003, p. 13). Students of warm-demander pedagogues recognized

this warm-demander teacher as an “other mother” figure: teachers with strength and the ability to make decisions to take control, when necessary, in order to uphold behavior and learning expectations. As pointed out by Irvine (2003), at times, teacher care was firm, requiring teachers to make the decision to not let students “slide by” with less than their best effort. Ware’s (2006) research on warm demanders supported these assertions by showing how teachers operating within this framework of care held high expectations for students and made intentional decisions to ensure that all students found success, regardless of prior knowledge and experiences.

The eight exemplary teachers of African American students in Ladson-Billings (1994) ethnographic study also possessed an ethic of care commonly referred to as culturally relevant teaching. This approach focused on creating a classroom community where students acquired academic success, while maintaining their cultural integrity and acquiring a sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1994; 1995). The teachers in this study had a deep relationship and commitment to the students and the community (Irvine, 2010) in which these students lived. These successful teachers recognized and made decisions that directly involved addressing issues of social injustice and inequity in the classroom.

Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002) contributed to the recognition that an ethic of care was necessarily political in her exploration of the pedagogy of exemplary black woman teachers. These teachers drew from what she named “womanist caring” which integrally involved teachers’ commitment to political clarity. She noted, “womanist teachers see racism and other systemic injustices as simultaneously social and educational problems”

(p. 77). Additionally, womanist caring delivered an ethic of risk-taking in curriculum and pedagogy that recognized:

...Life is unfair, but that the creation of fairness is the task of generations, [and] that work for justice is not incidental to one's life but is an essential aspect of affirming the delight and wonder of being alive (p. 81, from Welch, 1990, p. 70).

Drawing from her ethnographic work with Mexican and Mexican American students, Valenzuela validated the political nature of care and the invaluable role it played in teacher decision-making and its subsequent impact on all students' engagement with school.

The extent literature reviewed here on care and culturally responsive teaching highlights how students in classrooms with teachers who made decisions to include students' cultural experiences within a community of cared-for students had a positive impact on academic achievement of all students (Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2006). Regardless of how researchers specifically named the instructional piece it was concerned with culture, academic success and critical, sociopolitical awareness—i.e., “culturally responsive” or “culturally relevant” work, which provided a caring and socially just experience for all students.

This review recognized how teachers who made the decisions to establish and uphold an ethic of care (Noddings, 1992; 2005), and a commitment to social justice (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Howard, 2001; Irvine, 2010; Nieto, 2006) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; 2002; Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2006) had a positive impact on students' learning. Experts clearly expressed teachers who enact care had classrooms that were well-managed (Riner, 2000), used language purposively

(Johnston, 2004), and helped all children achieve (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; 1995; Ware, 2006). Teachers who implemented care also made classroom decisions to show care, promote care, and provide students with opportunities to take part in the negotiation of a caring community of learners (Noddings, 1992; 2005).

This review also revealed most research on teacher decision-making, in relation to an ethic of care and culturally responsive, relevant, teaching was collected in public school classrooms (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Neito, 2005; 2006). There is a gap in the literature. What about teachers not operating within the public school system? How are they making decisions about the classroom, the student, and the curriculum? What could public schools take away from knowledge of guide decision-making in a Montessori environment, specifically?

According to the literature, a community of learners was one of the six main tenets of Montessori education (Lillard, 1972) and a fundamental component of enacting care and culturally responsive or relevant teaching (Gay, 2000; 2002). Exploring how two Montessori guides make decisions about the classroom, the student, and the curriculum, within an environment designed to promote a community of learners, addresses this gap in the literature and furthers the literatures' understanding on teacher decision-making.

Chapter III: Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore how AMI trained lower elementary Montessori guides think and make decisions in the lower elementary Montessori classroom. This study was an opportunity to explore and represent teacher decision-making within a multi-age prepared environment supportive of the development of the whole child and the notion of a community of learners (Goertz, 2001; Lillard, 1972). Research in a lower elementary Montessori classroom extends current research on the decisions Montessori guides make in their daily practice, as well as provides a fresh perspective on teacher decision-making in general (Cossentino, 2009; Nelson & Delorenzo, 2011). The principle questions guiding this inquiry were:

- 1) What defining characteristics operated in the decision-making of guides in the Montessori lower elementary classroom?
- 2) How was care and cultural responsiveness understood and approached in the decision-making of guides in the Montessori lower elementary classroom?

There was considerable room for more knowledge and understanding about what characteristics operate in how lower elementary Montessori guides made curricular decisions in the lower elementary Montessori classroom. What was known was primarily contained in the original works of Dr. Montessori (1917/1964; 1965;

1960/1966; 1973; 2004) and others who have written about the Montessori paradigm and methodology related to more recent research in various disciplines, like cognitive psychology (Lillard, 1972; Lillard, 1996; Murray, 2011). In the last decade scholars have become more interested in Montessori classrooms, guides, and students (Besancon & Lubart, 2008; Cossentino, 2005; 2006; 2009; Ervin et al., 2010; Goertz, 2001; Nelson & DeLorenzo, 2011; Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005; Robinson, 2006; Ungerer, 2011). What remains missing from the literature is how, specifically, lower elementary Montessori guides make curricular decisions to support the theorized six main tenets of Montessori education: (1) freedom with responsibility; (2) structure and order; (3) reality and nature; (4) beauty and atmosphere; (5) the Montessori didactic materials; and (6) the development of community (Lillard, 1972). Investigating this aspect of Montessori education was the goal of this qualitative case study.

Case Study Design

In order to explore and represent curricular decisions made by lower elementary Montessori guides, I chose to engage in a qualitative case study. An accepted definition of case study research is “an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). Case study design resonated with the investigative questions for this study—the phenomenon being teacher curricular

decision-making within the context of a prepared, multi-age, lower elementary Montessori classroom.

Furthermore, case study design provided a nice framework for identifying patterns and themes among decision-making practices both within and across cases (Creswell, 2003). In this study, I defined a case as a lower elementary (grades 1-3) Montessori guide. In order to address how lower elementary Montessori guides made curricular decisions I paid particular attention to identifying and understanding the curricular decisions each guide made within the context of the key lesson specifically, as well as other instructive tasks and duties as a Montessori guide, including how they prepared the environment. Interviews, anecdotal classroom observations, formal stimulated recall sessions, and the collection and analysis of school, classroom, and guide documents served as data sources for this qualitative case study.

According to Stake (1995), interpretation was a method placing “persons most responsible for interpretations to be in the field, making observations, exercising subjective judgment, analyzing and synthesizing, all the while realizing their own consciousness” (p. 41). Frederick Erickson (1986) claimed the primary characteristic of qualitative research was the centrality of interpretation. An interpretivist researcher asserts a point of view grounded in a constructivist orientation of knowledge. Knowledge is constructed rather than discovered (Stake, 1995). Constructs are the different types of filters chosen to make sense of our realities, to change our realities from chaos to order.

Infants, children, and adults construct their understandings from experience and from being told what the world is, not by discovering it whirling there untouched by experience (Stake, 1995, p. 100).

As an interpretivist I actively engaged in the field, watching, observing, questioning, wondering, and ultimately interpreting the case: what defining characteristics operated in the decision-making of two lower elementary Montessori guides?

Recruitment and Selection of Site and Participants

I located an ideal Montessori school site using two main criteria: (1) the Montessori method enacted at the school aligned with the six theorized tenets of Montessori (Lillard, 1972; Montessori, 1965); and (2) both lower elementary Montessori guides were Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) certified. In keeping with the six theorized Montessori tenets I discussed in chapter 2, the school site I recruited, approached, and approved for my research site appeared to practice authentic Montessori methodology as situated in the existing literature (Lillard, 1972; Montessori, 1965). Both lower elementary Montessori guides in this case study were AMI certified. The Association Montessori Internationale was founded in 1929 by Dr. Maria Montessori to maintain the integrity of her life's work, and to ensure its perpetuity after her death (<http://www.montessori-ami.org>). Below is the outline of the online AMI elementary training program overview as reported on the AMI website:

- Montessori philosophy and practices of education with particular emphasis on the child aged 6 to 12 years
- Mathematics (arithmetic, geometry, and algebra)
- Language, written and spoken including functional aspects of grammar appropriate for children aged 6-12 years
- History and Prehistory

- Physical and Biological Sciences: understanding of the origins and development of the universe and of the human being's relationships to this development
- Presentations of physical and political geography, which are designed to give an understanding of the interdependencies of the Earth and life upon it
- Supervised practice sessions with Montessori materials under guidance of qualified staff
- Observation in AMI classes
- Practice teaching in AMI classes under the supervision of the trainers
- Material making
- Preparation of albums containing illustrated notes of didactic materials

According to Stake (1995) "The first criterion [for selecting a case] should be to maximize what we can learn" (p. 4). This Montessori school site and these two pre-selected lower elementary Montessori guides were representative of Montessori education approved by AMI (the sanctioned body responsible for preparing authentic Montessori guides true to Dr. Montessori's original beliefs and practices).

Data Collection

The methods employed were formulated using my two research questions: (1) What defining characteristics operated in the decision-making of guides in the Montessori lower elementary classroom? (2) How was care and cultural responsiveness understood and approached in the decision-making of guides in the Montessori lower elementary classroom? According to Creswell (2003), when formulating the case and identifying the data sources, the researcher is asked to consider which types of data yield the most useful information for this analysis. There were a plethora of methodological research choices to choose from in qualitative case study design, thus I was able to selectively choose

which best applied to my research questions and case. Aside from the research questions, the existing research on teacher decision-making presented in the literature review also informed my data collection methodology. Specifically, I relied upon semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, anecdotal field notes, formal stimulated recall conversations, and the collection and analysis of school, classroom, and guide documents. Details about the nature of each data source and a rationale for their inclusion in this study are outlined below.

Interviews

In qualitative research, interviews typically range from highly structured to free-flowing conversations (Merriam, 2009). I used a semi-structured interview design. I felt it was advantageous for this study given the focus was directed at exploring and making sense of how teacher's think and make decisions. The flexible nature of a semi-structured interview allowed me to choose the topics of our conversations, while also allowing participants to elaborate and deviate when they were compelled to extrapolate on given prompts or questions. Both guides and the elementary coordinator partook in 2 semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 1 hour a piece over the course of four months. The first interview took place within the first two months of the study, while the second interview took place within the second two months of the study.

At the first interview I asked both guides and the elementary coordinator to identify some information about Montessori education, Montessori certification, teacher decision-making, and his or her personal (or the school supported) pedagogy. The second interviews asked for decisions made about the role of care and how they approached diversity at this school and in each guide's classroom, in particular. The goal was to explore relationships at the school and within each lower elementary Montessori classroom community. In addition, the second interview explored how the school and guide's addressed diversity, difference, and culture.

During Luke and Evan's first interview I asked each lower elementary Montessori guide to bring two lower elementary Montessori albums with them to the interview. From each album, I asked them to choose one lesson to share with me. My goal was for more situated conversations about the curriculum. AMI guides created their own albums during their training. These albums served as the lower elementary Montessori three-year curriculum. I requested each lower elementary Montessori guide bring two albums of their choosing in order to engage in more thoughtful dialogue about the training process and the key lessons transcribed and recorded in their albums. In addition, I asked each guide to pre-select two key lessons to share with me in detail. I gained an understanding of the lower elementary Montessori curriculum from seeing the albums and hearing the guide's interpretation of what the key lessons in the albums meant to him. Having the key lessons available as a resource also allowed me to see what the lesson looked like, which prompted me to learn more about how the guide delivered the key lesson to the children in their lower elementary Montessori classrooms.

Semi-structured interviews allowed Luke and Evan to tell their story, while also accomplishing a goal. Qualitative interviews parallel quantitative observations: they seek to aggregate perceptions or knowledge over multiple respondents. As recommended by Stake (1995), “A research-question-based set of questions should be worked out in advance, with departures from the protocol limited by design” (p. 65). I began each guide interview by asking Luke and Evan to tell me how they got involved in Montessori education. Then, I entered into the initial interview with a list of open-ended questions about each guide’s philosophy of teaching, including his beliefs, values, experiences, and practices that were understood and approached in their lower elementary Montessori classrooms. See Appendix B for interview one questions. This interview asked specific questions about AMI training and certification, as well as other influences on their practice and teaching philosophy. The first interviews lasted approximately an hour a piece. All interviews of guides and administrators were audio-taped, transcribed, and later given to each participant for review.

In order to get a full picture of the school’s philosophy and interpretation of Montessori education, I interviewed Jerry, the elementary coordinator twice and Deb, the founder of River Montessori once. Each interview was approximately an hour and fifteen minutes long. Like my interviews with Luke and Evan I asked semi-structured questions related to Jerry and Deb’s initial interest in Montessori, their training, and the back-story of River Montessori. During Jerry’s interviews we explored his role as the elementary coordinator and the responsibilities and services he provided in support of the lower elementary guides. We also discussed River Montessori’s handbooks, as well as other

resources influencing the pedagogy at River Montessori. For a detailed list of questions I asked Jerry see Appendix C.

Deb and I discussed her Montessori story and how she came to own and operate this private Montessori school. We also discussed her notion of social and emotional development, since Jerry mentioned she wrote a book on this topic while teaching at River Montessori in the lower elementary Montessori classroom. I even had the opportunity to ask Deb's opinion on Montessori education and whether she believed the tenets of Montessori included applications of culture and difference. Given Deb's lawyers had not signed the consent to participate form prior to our interview I was not able to audio record or transcribe this data. However, immediately following the interview I jotted down five pages of notes recalling the main components of the conversation in as much detail as possible.

Instead of having a final interview with Jerry, Luke, and Evan we decided to talk frequently about any questions or noticings I had in regards to the school documents, or teacher decision-making in the lower elementary classroom on observation days, while I was at River Montessori. Jerry was a very welcoming man, open to me popping into his office. He also placed me on River Montessori's listserve, which meant I had access to the school's weekly newsletter that went out to parents and staff. Luke and Evan requested I ask any questions I had about observational data the same day of the observation, either during lunchtime, recess, or after school.

I transcribed the interview and stimulated recall data for Jerry, the elementary coordinator, and Luke and Evan, the two lower elementary Montessori guides in this

study. I then photocopied my handwritten field notes from full and half-day observations. I placed each participant's data in a hanging file and delivered it to the school for Jerry, Luke, and Evan to review and member check for accuracy of thought and clarity of content. Since, my conversation with the founder, Deb, was a one-time conversation on a holiday and at the time of the conversation she had not signed the consent to participate form, I did not provide her with written documentation of our conversation. However, Deb's lawyers reviewed the document and signed it the next day allowing me to report Deb's perspective as remembered by me from handwritten field notes jotted down after the interview.

I gave each participant (aside from Deb) a folder containing all of his participant data. I wanted all participants to see their voice and have the time to read their voice before I began reporting the data. This gave Jerry, Luke, and Evan the opportunity to make changes to the existing data, if they felt what was said misrepresented what they meant. Stake (1995) said it best, "All researchers recognized the need for not only being accurate in measuring things but logical in interpreting the meaning of those measurements" (p. 108). Understanding ones' decision-making had many challenges. I address ways to prevent errors of validity later in this chapter.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations gave me opportunities to witness the phenomena under investigation in its authentic context. Given the nature of a lower elementary Montessori classroom is a prepared environment, where the child acts upon his or her needs, my role was to be a “complete observer” in this study. According to Merriam (2009), a “complete observer” was either hidden from the group or in a public space. In this case study, I was in a lower elementary Montessori classroom, which was a public space. I intended to make myself as invisible as possible. What I quickly noticed, on my first observation day, was within the Montessori paradigm there are grace and courtesy rules for visitors. To the children and guide I was a visitor. On my first visit to both Luke and Evan’s classrooms I was invited by a child to sign the classroom visitor book. Throughout my stay in each classroom the children would approach me with work once and a while and tell me about what they were doing. I ate lunch with the children, as well. Thus, my intentions of being a “complete observer” were not compatible with the grace and courtesy lessons within the Montessori lower elementary classroom at River Montessori. I adjusted and responded with compliance, but limited my conversations and responses to the children.

I scheduled 3 full day and 2 half a day observations with Luke and 3 full day and 2 half a day observations with Evan. Observations took place on different days each week for a total of 4 months. Total I observed each guide for 30 hours. The observations were arranged with Luke and Evan, allowing each guide to choose the days I would collect

handwritten observational data in their lower elementary Montessori classrooms. On half days only morning work time was observed. Morning work time consisted of three hours of an uninterrupted work period from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Each lower elementary Montessori guide reserved the right to reschedule an observation due to illness or a classroom situation interrupting the natural flow of the classroom. In this case, the lower elementary Montessori guide contacted me early in the morning to let me know they needed to cancel my observation date. Both Luke and Evan each canceled an observation one time and due to conflicting schedules these two observations were awash.

Handwritten Anecdotal Field Notes

Handwritten anecdotal field notes were taken during classroom visits including what the guides said to facilitate the flow of the classroom, as well as general observations involving key lesson presentations, management and discipline. I recorded my handwritten notes on unlined white printer paper atop a clipboard. Jerry, Luke, and Evan suggested I not use a computer to take notes on because this device was not in use in the lower elementary Montessori classroom. The children attached paper to clipboards, instead. I agreed to use paper and a clipboard. Handwritten anecdotal field notes allowed me to situate the context within which the teacher made decisions about the child, environment, and curriculum. These notes also served as talking points when we

met to discuss decisions made in specific moments, in detail, either formally in a stimulated recall session or informally during lunchtime, recess, or after school.

Formal Stimulated Recall Sessions

Each lower elementary Montessori guide met with me twice for a formal stimulated recall session lasting approximately one hour a piece. Prior to each recall session I read over my handwritten anecdotal field notes the night before. I highlighted lessons I observed that did not make sense to me, or events that happened that I wanted the guide to tell me more about. Luke and Evan asked me to choose what to talk about given their busy lives and schedules outside of my research study. However, during the session I noticed my questions triggered events that they wondered about and then reported on. I stimulated each teacher's thinking and decision-making back to the moments I selected by giving them the context for the lesson, including where in the room the lesson took place and with how many students, as well as specific dialogue the guide used to invite the children or convey the story of the key lesson of choice. I used questions and prompts to explore the guide's decision-making. For a list of stimulated recall questions please see Appendix E.

I audio-taped and transcribed all stimulated recall sessions. I also handwrote notes during each stimulated recall session in case there was a technical problem with the tape

recording device. Luckily, I did not encounter any issues with the audio recorder. You may notice Evan only had one formal stimulated recall session. Evan had a much more challenging schedule as he was a father of a small child and thus instead of having his interview 2 and his stimulated recall 2 at separate times he opted to have them together. A few hours after each stimulated recall session I prepared my initial interpretation of key meanings collected during each session including how each lower elementary Montessori guide responded to my selected vignettes, questions, and prompts. Stake (1995) referred to this data collection processes: “A good interviewer can reconstruct the account and submit it to the respondent for accuracy and stylistic improvement” (p. 66).

School, Classroom, and Guide Documents

School, classroom, and guide documents were also collected from Jerry, Luke, and Evan. As a qualitative researcher it is crucial to have an understanding of the larger social structure within which the lower elementary Montessori guide made decisions and enacted practice.

Because of their overall value, documents play an explicit role in any data collection in doing case studies...you should allot time for using local libraries and other reference centers...you should also arrange access to examine the files of any organizations being studied. (Yin, 2003, p. 87)

Jerry, the elementary coordinator, shared several school documents with me including the Community Handbook, parts of the Staff Handbook, weekly newsletters, parent resource

lists, articles written by him or the founder, Deb, as well as other articles and books that informed River Montessori's practice.

Guide documents were also collected. Given neither lower elementary Montessori guide in this study wrote lessons plans or took formal notes on lessons the document data from the guides was minimal. However, I did receive book titles and authors from Luke and a physical book from Evan, *The Compassionate Classroom*. I collected information on the resources each guide relied on for subject matter content knowledge, for pedagogical strategies.

Data Analysis

In the book *Qualitative Researcher: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, Merriam (2009) described data analysis for a case study as “conveying an understanding of the case” (p. 203). Making sense of how lower elementary Montessori guide's think and make decisions about students, the environment, and the curriculum was examined. In particular, guide talk as it related to the six theorized tenets of Montessori (Lillard, 1972), as well guide instructional practices through the delivery of the lower elementary Montessori key lessons (Seldin & Epstein, 2003). “The qualitative researcher concentrates on the instance, trying to pull it apart and put it back together again more meaningfully—analysis and synthesis in direct interpretation” (Stake, 1995, p. 75). In

this research study, I focused on the instance where the guide was actively making decisions as they related to the theorized tenets of Montessori and the lower elementary key lessons.

All data collected via interviews, anecdotal field notes, audio-tape, and documents was examined for patterns and themes. The goal was to explore any patterns that emerged in how lower elementary Montessori guide's think and make decisions about students, the environment, and the curriculum.

Glesne (1999) suggested, "data analysis done simultaneously with data collection enables you to focus and shape the study as it proceeds" (p. 130). Analytic memos and researcher reflections allowed me to analyze data as it was collected. As I observed each lower elementary Montessori guide in his classroom, I jotted down thoughts, connections, wonderings, and comments that were elicited in the guide's talk or from the events of the classroom in general. These notes served as researcher reflections in this qualitative study. Researcher reflection enabled me to connect the patterns and structures that emerged from Luke and Evan's decision-making to what the literature said about elementary teacher decision-making.

The data collected from interviews, classroom observations, anecdotal field notes, formal stimulated recall sessions, and school, classroom, and guide documents was analyzed for themes and recurring patterns of meaning. "The search for meaning often is a search for patterns, for consistency, for consistency within certain conditions, which we call correspondence" (Stake, 1995, p. 78). In this case, I was trying to understand

behaviors, issues, and contexts with regard to how lower elementary Montessori guides made decisions in their classrooms about students, the environment, and the curriculum.

Secondly, the data collected was juxtaposed to two theoretical frameworks purposively selected for this qualitative case study: (1) an ethic of care (Noddings, 1992; 2005); and (2) culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; 2002). Was there a relationship between how lower elementary Montessori guide's made decisions and how teachers with an ethic of care and cultural responsiveness made decisions? If so, how and in what ways? Special attention was given to how lower elementary Montessori guide's decision-making was different from how teacher's with an ethic of care and cultural responsiveness made decisions?

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers serve as interpreters in the field. They are interpreters who “observe the workings of the case, one who records objectively what is happening but simultaneously examines its meaning and redirects observations to refine or substantiate those meanings” (Stake, 1995; p. 9). Objectivity is arguably the challenge of any research study. Scholarly banter about what it means to be objective renders two main thoughts: (1) reporting an accurate and precise portrayal of a case is ideal; and (2) eliminating bias is challenging.

Qualitative research relies heavily upon interpretation. In order for a qualitative researcher to produce a thick, descriptive narrative they must maintain a chain of evidence. Yin (2009) reported a chain of evidence was an accurate, organized record of the case study data. I organized data collected (school documents, teacher documents, classroom documents, anecdotal observations, teacher audio-tapes, and any analytic memos constructed) into file folders on the computer. All hard copies of documents including photographs, and handwritten anecdotal notes were also filed and labeled.

Triangulation was another tool to increase trustworthiness. Stake (1995) defined data source triangulation as “an effort to see if what we are observing and reporting carries the same meaning when found under different circumstances” (p. 113).

Triangulation entailed confirming the accuracy of data and interpretations through the use of member checks. I allowed each participant the opportunity to clarify any data collected. This prevented misrepresentations and thus strengthened the credibility of my conclusions. Specifically, all interview transcripts were given to participants for review, as well as all anecdotal notes and transcriptions of teacher audio recordings. In addition, all notes recorded during stimulated recall sessions were transcribed, printed, and given to participants.

Statement on Researcher Positionality

I am very invested in the search for a better understanding of how lower elementary Montessori guides' think and make decisions in their classrooms. My attachment to this field of study sharpened my attention to the details taking place in each lower elementary Montessori classroom. I was acutely aware of my personal interest in lower elementary Montessori guide decision-making, having served as a lower elementary Montessori guide in the recent past. As stated in Glesne (2006), "I may hear what I want to hear and see what I want to see. I may easily find ways of discrediting those that disagree" (p. 38). I addressed researcher bias by continuously exploring my own subjectivity. By writing both before and after my interviews and observations I was able to address pre-conceived opinions and reflect upon my personal bias.

My decision to look closely at the Montessori lower elementary culture was the result of my personal experiences as a Montessori guide for a charter and private Montessori school. It is not unusual for case study design research to address topics of personal interest. Many scholars have a vested interest and knowledge about topics they study. Some researchers accuse scholars who do research in familiar territory as biased and unable to look objectively, while others purport its benefits, including insider privileges.

As a former Montessori practitioner in a lower elementary context I had several insider privileges including the experience of earning a Montessori certificate to be a lead teacher in a lower elementary Montessori classroom of six to nine year olds, as well as

knowledge and time using the lower elementary Montessori curriculum and its supportive materials and lessons. There was, however, one major difference between my Montessori certificate and that of the two lower elementary Montessori guides in my study. My certificate was not sanctioned by AMI. Thus, according to Montessorians I was still a Montessori outsider.

My rationale for recruiting guides and administrators from an AMI accredited school was two fold: (1) AMI certification represents a direct connection to Montessori; and (2) the likelihood that AMI certified guides address and support the main tenets for authentic Montessori was high. In addition, there was a gap in the literature. Few studies have explored Montessori guide decision-making in relation to the main tenets of Montessori (Cossentino, 2009; Nelson & Delorenzo, 2011) and current understandings of how teachers make decisions in diverse classroom settings (Pang, 2001). Lastly, new insights on ways public schools enhanced opportunities for care and culturally responsive teaching were theoretically aligned with tenets of Montessori education: (1) observing and knowing the child (Noddings, 1992; 2005; Gay, 2000; 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Irvine, 2003); (2) creating a community of learners (Howard, 2001; Gay, 2000; 2002; Johnston, 2004); and (3) operating within a governing system with continuity (Noddings, 2005). The purpose of this research study was to explore, beyond theory, by examining how lower elementary Montessori guides made decisions in relation to students, the environment, and the curriculum. The frameworks of care (Noddings, 1992; 2005) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; 2002) helped to make sense of all of the data collected.

Chapter IV: River Montessori

Vignette

Montessori environments have a reputation for emitting energy indicative of peace: calming, helpful, and compassionate. Knowing Montessori schools cast a very different experience for the senses alerted me to react with energy aligned with the Montessori essence I had come to know from reading Dr. Montessori's original works. Having taught in two different Montessori communities as the lead guide, I had also experienced the peace firsthand. According to Dr. Montessori, the Montessori environment was a prepared environment free of clutter and disarray. The environment was selectively and purposively chosen based on the developmental plane of the child, allowing the child to act with purpose within his self-selected sensitive period. The numbers of items on the shelves were limited, requiring children to learn discipline. The Montessori guide acted in favor of the child, without interrupting the child's natural inclinations to explore, discover, and work. It was noted in Dr. Montessori's study of children that guides with proper hygiene and care for their appearance, as well as graceful movements were more successful with the children. She observed and reported a significant connection between beauty, simplicity and children's ability to exercise freedom with responsibility toward their work. I anticipated what River Montessori's environment would look like as I drove to the site for my first meeting with Jerry, the elementary coordinator.

The River Montessori campus was on a three-lane road, next to a public elementary school between two major shopping centers with multiple businesses. This was a residential block. There were rental duplexes across the street from the school and the school itself was a series of single story ranch style homes. The River Montessori sign was made of natural wood and painted with soothing hues of green and blue. I entered the small parking area located a few feet beyond the River Montessori sign. The lot served as a turn around and a place for visitors to park. It appeared to have room for about fifteen vehicles total. I noticed the school had a small yellow school bus parked in the rear of the parking lot. Jerry informed me in our first interview River Montessori offered a transportation service to parents that escorted children between River Montessori campuses. There were three campuses in all, two campuses that served younger children and one campus educating adolescents. The bus left at specific times arranged by the school. Parents had the option to participate.

It was impossible to anticipate and prepare for all that I was about to observe and do at River Montessori. My nervous energy quickened to butterflies as I opened the driver side door. My heart was beating rapidly and sweat formed in the palms of my hands. I knew I was about to speak to the gatekeeper at River Montessori about being a researcher on this campus. Nerves metamorphosed into forced confidence as I told myself research was what I was trained to do. The knowledge and skill set were there all I had to do was apply what I knew in real life. I collected my thoughts and enabled my body to relax as I approached the first building adjacent to the parking lot subtly marked office.

I swung open the door with a little too much force and lurched into the room giving my best research investigator smile. I was a bit startled at the set up. There was a cheerful woman immediately to my left. I told her I was early for my meeting with Jerry, and awaited her response. She motioned for me to take a seat in one of two chairs in the waiting area. I accepted and sat in the chair nearest the small hallway. The back of the building had a room, the size of a small bedroom, with a piano in it. There was an adult woman seated next to a middle-aged child on a piano bench engaged in a lesson. While I waited I listened to the child practice. Across from the piano room there was a stackable washer and dryer and a full kitchen. Two students, who looked to be 12 years of age, were waiting for the dryer to finish while they held a laundry basket between them. I learned later this laundry area was available to the children for washing classroom cloth napkins, rugs, towels, and other household items for reuse.

As I took in the sights and sounds surrounding me I felt strangely at home. Forgetting for a moment the demands before me I shut my eyes. The level of noise was minimal even though there were several people functioning in a rather tight space. When I opened my eyes the smiling woman from behind the counter was back. Jerry entered the room. He welcomed me to River Montessori and graciously invited me to his office motioning with his arm. I stood, shook his hand and thanked him for taking the time to entertain my research interests. He led me into the next room. As we turned the corner from the small waiting area to the rest of the house the first noticing was the dimensions of the space that unfolded in front of me. The main section of the office house was a large rectangular room with a long rectangular worktable, hip height in the center of the

room. On the worktable there were different supplies available, including colored paper of various sizes, different containers, and various other office supplies.

I noticed there were a lot of wooden items in the room, and not many plastics. Montessori environments are known to use materials made out of natural materials. The Montessori community was highly conscious of their environmental impact. Dr. Montessori spoke insistently about teaching lessons within the context of universal laws. She was also a firm believer that learning does not stop when the children went outside into the natural world. Instead, it was in the natural environment where the child engaged, explored, and applied the skills learned when working with the didactic materials and practical life activities.

There were five computers to my right on a long rectangular table attached to the wall. Each computer had a large cushioned chair positioned in front of the computer screen. Jerry explained this was a work area for the guides and assistants. He clarified that at River Montessori assistants assisted the guide, not the children. He pointed out different areas of the room. As Jerry spoke I saw several assistants managing guides' calendars and appointments at the computer station. Before we entered his office Jerry asked if I would care for some hot tea. This was my first invitation to have tea made in a school. Since, I was caught off guard I did not think to say yes, so I politely declined.

Jerry offered me a seat. As I sat in one of two chairs, Jerry swiveled to face me. The angle of his desk provided for direct contact between Jerry and I. When Jerry's eyes met mine I sensed it was time for my prepared two-minute research pitch. I explained to Jerry who I was and what I intended to study. There was a clear gap in the education

literature on Montessori education in general and specifically how Montessori guides make classroom decisions. Knowing the Montessori paradigm was not grade driven made my data collection selection easy. This research study would be a qualitative case study intent on telling the lower elementary Montessori guide's story. The hypothesis was Montessori guides had more opportunities to make decisions and act based on theories of care and culturally responsive teaching given the major tenets of Montessori education aligned with a whole child approach.

Jerry listened without interruption. When I was finished he asked for clarification about the theories of care and culturally responsive teaching I would use to compare how his guides made decisions in their classrooms. I shared my knowledge of the characteristics of care and culturally responsive teaching while Jerry made connections between these qualities and his staff. He quickly narrowed his list of participants to two male lower elementary guides at this south campus. He sensed these two guides were ideal guides for my particular research questions and theoretical frameworks.

Jerry alluded he was on board for the research study. However, his approval was just the first step. Ultimately, it was the guide's decision, not his. I thought it was interesting that Jerry made it clear that only each guide knew if he had time to be a part of this study. Jerry recognized he did not have the authority to say yes for another person's decision. I wondered if this schema was related to a school culture of choice? I noted in the literature review that teachers with autonomy and volition were happier teachers who practiced in the classroom longer with less burnout and better student outcomes (Boote, 2006). Was River Montessori a school where guides had volition and felt empowered?

The clear distinction between Jerry's interest and that of his guide's served as an initial glimpse into the camaraderie and respect for colleagues at River Montessori.

After Jerry's approval, he offered me a tour of the campus and one of the two lower elementary Montessori classrooms I would potentially observe. School was not in session as summer break had begun a week ago. As we moved out the backdoor of the office we immediately entered a green space with gravel walkways. There were bushes of rosemary, lavender, and other herbs billowing out over the edge of the trimmed walkways. Wild flowers and other flowered plants greeted our senses making my initial impression of the school grounds a positive one. There was so much nature to beholden and receive. My eyes absorbed the colors red, yellow, purple, and green. The air was fragrant as we walked along the path into the main lawn. There was a storage house directly to the south and a high wooden gated fence to the right.

There were several buildings along the perimeter and one open green space. Each classroom house had an outdoor workspace separated by low chain-linked fences. The outdoor spaces behind each classroom had garden areas, outdoor furniture, and even outdoor cubbies where children changed into their outdoor shoes. Large oak trees provided shade over wooden playground equipment. Several wooden picnic tables were scattered within the playground area where I assumed children gathered to work and talk. There was an area in the far left corner with piles of off-white rocks scattered about in different patterns and piles. I saw a garden with remaining fruits, vegetables, and herbs, now dead from the endless heat that had been our spring in Central Texas.

We passed the rocks and entered another garden area with herbs, wildflowers, and large trees. There were two picnic tables placed under the trees. We walked through French doors into one of two lower elementary classrooms at River Montessori. As we entered there were cubbies immediately to my right and a child-sized sink straight ahead. There was also a small, organized, and dark-colored restroom to the left. I saw art on the wall neatly framed, paper towels stacked in a basket on the back of the toilet, a mirror, and a 'How to wash your hands' sign near the sink.

Continuing into the room waist high shelving was arranged around the perimeter. The only place there appeared to be no shelving was in front of windows and doors. I observed a full kitchen on the far left and a keyboard covered in plastic on the far right. In the back of the classroom were cubbies for children to place their jackets, lunch containers, and any other items they may have brought with them to school that day. Rows of hooks lined the wall and a shelf ran along the length of the wall above the cubbies. Near the cubby area was a large walk-in closet with wall-to-wall shelving. Jerry explained this was the guide's closet that he used as he saw fit. He stated most guides used this space for supplies and materials that would be rotated into the prepared environment throughout the year. The front of the classroom building was mostly glass. There were a few large windows and another pair of French doors leading out to the street where parents parked to enter the classroom at the end of the day. When we walked into the front yard there were two more picnic tables, more trees, and bushes and plants along the front of the building and the fence line. The wooden fence separating the classroom and the road was rather high, maybe six feet tall.

Jerry mentioned River Montessori was in the process of packing up each classroom for the summer making it a challenge to ascertain the authentic lower elementary prepared environment, but he hoped I got a good sense of what it looked like. There were several round and square wooden tables and chairs all the same grain and color between the shelves around the room. At times the shelving around the perimeter acted as walls, like a partition, providing for distinct work areas. Jerry articulated how the room was arranged to have work areas for specific subject matter content and the materials were shelved in succession starting with concrete materials and moving to more abstract materials. He showcased the keyboard and how students were encouraged to practice music, as music was a part of the curriculum. Jerry also highlighted the purpose of having a full kitchen in the classroom. At River Montessori the classroom ate lunch together in the room and the school provided glass plates, mugs, cups, and bowls, as well as Silverware and pots and pans for the children to use. He emphasized the expectation that students were to bring only healthful, unprocessed foods in reusable containers.

River Montessori was emblematic of the images I visualized when reading Dr. Montessori's original works. It was impossible to hide my inner delight about River Montessori. Jerry and I were in agreement we both wanted to tell River Montessori's story through the eyes of two veteran lower elementary Montessori guides at the south campus. Jerry arranged a meeting with the two male guides and within the month they agreed to participate in my research study. At this time I created a tentative calendar of the dates and times I desired to meet with Jerry, Luke, and Evan for interviews, observations, and stimulated recall sessions. The calendar was sent to all participants and

each person selected which days and times were available for him. I was incredibly grateful they were willing to give me their time in order to be a participant in my research study. This study was not sponsored by a research grant, thus payment was impossible, but respect for one's time was not.

River Montessori's Ideology

Qualitative researchers search to explain the complex interrelationships among all relationship's that exist and affect the chosen case (Stake, 1995). In order to gain access to what defining characteristics operated in the decision-making of lower elementary Montessori guides at River Montessori I first had to understand River Montessori's ideology as a school. The decisions both River Montessori guides made functioned within the context of the school's rules, policies, procedures, and culture. Not acknowledging this fact reported an incomplete story of decisions made. Jerry, the elementary coordinator, as well as Deb, the founder of River Montessori answered my questions related to the school's mission, goals, policies and procedures, and communication with families. I was also given the River Montessori Community Handbook and Staff Handbook, which contained information on how the school made decisions in support of their mission using their interpretation of Dr. Montessori's methods in favor of preparing the whole child in a prepared environment where the child was at the center of learning, not the guide.

Themes that emerged from interviews and school documents about River Montessori's ideology were: (1) learning as a process; (2) producing self-knowledge in the child; (3) respecting the authentic nature of the child; (4) mandating specific policies and procedures; (5) supporting a prepared environment; (6) recognizing the Montessori teacher as a guide; (7) implementing a unique policy on discipline; and (8) communicating with families with transparency. I had insightful conversations with both Jerry and Deb about how River Montessori approached hiring and supporting the lower elementary Montessori guide. There was also detailed written documentation of unique classroom policies and procedures in place at River Montessori indicative of Dr. Montessori's philosophy of education and view of the child.

Learning as a Process

Jerry expressed a commitment and reverence for Dr. Montessori's beliefs of childhood and the purpose of education as creating a child with self-knowledge, confidence, and the skills and competencies to contribute to society. Dr. Montessori referred to Jerry's description of the child as a child with psychic balance. "A newborn child should also be taken to provide for psychic adjustment to the world about it" (Montessori, 1966, p. 23). Psychoanalysis was a new scientific development when Dr. Montessori was beginning her journey as a scientist and educator of children. Most psychological studies in the early 20th century showcased what was wrong with children and sought to return the

maladjusted child to a normal state. Dr. Montessori was interested in proactive measures, as opposed to reactive ones, concerning herself with creating an appropriate space for a child to nourish healthful behaviors. River Montessori grounded its practice in proactive decision-making based on Dr. Montessori's original works, lectures, and correspondence.

Jerry: Our school is known in AMI circles as a school that goes out of its way to implement Montessori in its sort of purest form. Of course that means it goes without saying that anybody doing Montessori at the beginning of the 21st century is going to have adapted and made changes, and so forth, adapted to the culture that we are serving. So, it is not as though we are reproducing exactly what Dr. Montessori did 70 years ago. But, we look to her philosophy and her methods first to see how we can solve problems and serve children and we reluctantly make changes to that conservatively.

Having read several of Montessori's books I was aware of some constructs Montessori employed in her pedagogy and used these as conversation starters with Jerry. I brought up the notion of mastery early on in the interview. Mastery is a term thrown around in Montessori's books and in research within Montessori environments. Montessori used this term to conceptualize when to introduce different key lessons in the curriculum to the child.

It is important for us to know the nature of a child's work. When a child works, he does not do so to attain some further goal. His objective in working is the work itself, and when he has repeated an exercise and brought his own activities to an end, this end is independent of external factors. As far as the child's personal reactions are concerned, his cessation from work is not connected with weariness since it is characteristic of a child to leave his work completely refreshed and full of energy. (Montessori, 1966, p. 196)

Mastery happens when a child concentrates on his work, repeats it often, and leaves the experience with the appearance of fulfillment. According to Montessori, it was the job of the guide to watch and observe the child looking for signs that the child was ready for or

interested in different work. At times this did not involve any direct contact between the guide and the child, it could be spontaneous and the result of a child's interaction with the work.

According to Jerry, "Mastery is ongoing...there is no point of arrival." He referenced Pink's book *Drive* stating, "Mastery is getting better and better at something that matters to you. You can take samples from time to time, but being able to do a particular thing does not necessarily mean mastery." Jerry substituted the term mastery for learning here. What I gained from this conversation was how mastery was operationalized at River Montessori. It was the term used to discuss student progress within the three-year Montessori curriculum for each plane of development. River Montessori saw learning as a process, not the product of a text given at a specific time on any given day. River Montessori did not operate on a grading system like public elementary schools. Each student had a portfolio of works and a pinwheel of expectations for each three-year developmental plane. As the child fulfilled the desired three-year curricular expectations the guide or child would shade in the pinwheel of subject matter content knowledge, skills, and competencies. The pinwheel allowed the guide and child to shade in areas of the curriculum mastered, directing the child's and guide's attention and focus to the areas of need. It served as a concrete visual tool as well.

The development of a pinwheel of curricular expectations for each plane of development was an example of how River Montessori conservatively made adjustments to Dr. Montessori's original methodology. Jerry believed the pinwheel was a necessary

adaptation aligned with other concrete tools Dr. Montessori developed. At River Montessori children prepared for and planned academic conferences with their parents throughout the year. The guide was also present, but played a supportive role. The child had the opportunity to show the parent this pinwheel, providing the parent with an understanding of where the child was in the three-year curricular cycle.

There was a statement in the Staff Handbook about mastery. This statement was positioned in the context of the beginning of the year and what the guide could expect.

Often a Montessori class will begin with a fixed time schedule for the day's activities in the fall. However, as the children gain a degree of mastery over themselves and the environment, the fixed time schedule may be gradually abandoned.

At the beginning of the year children were not expected to be self-directed. It was the role of the guide to create a time schedule to enhance the child's connection to work. Once the children reached a degree of mastery all subsequent activity occurred in response to the children, not a fixed schedule. The guide was trained to recognize, through observation, when children had reached mastery and could satisfactorily self-manage work. River Montessori questioned:

Whether it is more important for the children to develop their natural work cycle, to learn how to learn, and to create themselves, or to gain a particular intellectual content?

For River Montessori the former was a Montessori objective, while the latter was representative of objectives driven instructional practices. "A Montessori program must be committed to supporting the spontaneous unfolding of child life."

I asked Jerry to expound on how guides made decisions about when a child had reached mastery since there was no pass or fail grade system in place. When could the child or guide shade in an area on the pinwheel as mastered? Jerry informed me one way he and the guides at River Montessori made decisions, regarding mastery was if the child could teach the work to other children in the classroom. According to Jerry, the ability to teach others showed a certain level of understanding reflective of mastery. Another way a child showed mastery was if the child presented his or her knowledge to other communities on the school grounds. In the Staff Handbook there were specific items the guide followed to help the child before he or she took his or her research report around the campus. There was a list of 9 expectations for the guide to follow.

The adults in charge saw that:

1. Written conduct was expanded upon.
2. Structure was improved with introductory paragraph and closing paragraph.
3. Spelling and grammar were corrected with punctuation in place.
4. Clean copy, final draft made.
5. Delivery was rehearsed with adult for clear articulation, correct punctuation, definition and meaning.
6. Volume, projection, tempo of voice, expressive and natural delivery.
7. Understanding and information on subject was expanded using several sources.
8. Physical presence was considered, posture, bearing, eye contact.
9. Rehearsals were held before the mirror and across the yard to a partner.

At the end of this list there was a disclaimer for the guide that stated this process or list was to be carried out only if it was supportive of each child. The guide must take into account individual developmental needs. The goal was to support the child to reach his or her personal best.

After guides approved children's reports they were free to move about the campus giving presentations to their peers. Upper elementary children presented to the lower elementary children and the lower elementary children presented to the primary children. According to Jerry, mastery was not the sole outcome for River Montessori children. The desired learning goal was:

Self-knowledge, comfort in his or her skin, knowledge of who he or she is, the ability to go out into the world and look for that contribution that is right for him or her.

I was able to see first-hand how River Montessori graduates articulated their sense of self in a parent directed talk entitled *What's Next After Montessori*.

Self-Knowledge

The presentation for parents entitled *What Next After Montessori* took place on a weekend night. At this talk Jerry and the adolescent community guide shared stories and knowledge about the quality of skills and competencies River Montessori families could expect from their children when they left the community. Jerry and the adolescent guide prepared the content of the presentation. Parents prepared the classroom where the talk was given. Attending this talk allowed me to triangulate the data shared in my interview with Jerry about the learning goals at River Montessori. It also allowed me to see the northern campus and make some comparisons between the two campuses. The first thing I noticed was the northern campus had a large steel container for the collection of

rainwater. The southern campus did not collect rainwater. A similarity between campuses was the simple, clean beauty of the interior space of the classroom, as well as a vibrant and accessible green space.

In the classroom there was a large white screen drawn and rows of chairs already set up facing the screen. Two bottles of wine, cups, punch, and some healthful snacks awaited guests. We were called to our seats and the presentation began promptly as promised. The adolescent guide spoke first. He reported on the experiences and competencies of River Montessori graduates based on the in-school curricular experiences and outings from field trips as a community. Jerry followed the adolescent guide's presentation with his own personal experience as a parent of a son who attended River Montessori. He spoke of the qualities developed in his child over the years and where he subsequently went to high school leading into the college his son chose after high school. Lastly, Jerry shared a previously recorded conversation between former River Montessori graduates and parents of children enrolled at River Montessori. The graduates of River Montessori answered questions parents had about the transition from a Montessori school to various high schools and colleges.

The most memorable experience from *What's Next After Montessori* was the emphasis on competencies gained through experiences unique to River Montessori, including community outings and opportunities for small group outings for research purposes. River Montessori showcased how the major community outings were organized, prepared, and implemented by River Montessori students. The guides and staff were the support system for the children. The children were the managers

orchestrating the events and daily agendas. The adolescent guide and Jerry shared how such outings enhanced the student's executive functions. Executive function referred to:

...A collection of thinking processes involved in guiding, managing, and directing cognitive functions and behavioral or emotional responses. (Bagby, Barnard-Brak, Sulak, Jones, & Walter, 2012, p. 418)

Many problem-solving skills required executive functioning including planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Bagby et al. (2012) asserted executive function skills contributed to academic success especially when faced with novel situations. The question was if a child's educational environment impacted the development of executive functions. The results from this study indicated that students in Montessori and Catholic school environments appeared to have better executive function, rated by teachers, compared to students in a classical school environment (Bagby et al., 2012). This finding aligned with Jerry's perspective on River Montessori students' executive function. Jerry made it clear that River Montessori graduates had several opportunities to perfect their problem solving skills, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating during community outings and events.

At the end of the *What's Next After Montessori* talk, there were candid conversations between parents, prospective parents, and the presenters about real life concerns parents of high school aged children face. Parents wondered how River Montessori students adjusted to turning in assignments on time, receiving grades, and transitioning between classrooms. Parents were also interested in an overall report on the performance of River Montessori graduates in a public or private school setting outside of the Montessori paradigm. Jerry provided parents with a list of colleges River

Montessori graduates attended in the past. The list had several colleges and universities, including prestigious Ivy League schools. Jerry qualified his decision to give parents this list stating his intent was not to brag, but to include all colleges attended regardless of the reputation.

The topic of drugs, drinking, and sexual acts were brought up by one concerned parent. Jerry tackled these questions using his personal experience as a father and the older students in the video had personal input on temptation as well. What surprised me most about this exchange was how natural it felt to be able to ask honest questions and receive honest answers. I even remember blushing as Jerry spoke because it was unusual to be present for a conversation like this one. Once concerns and questions were heard and addressed the room stood and each person folded his or her chair carrying it to the shed out back of the classroom. The River Montessori way had clearly taught parents responsibility and care for the environment.

There were several connections made between the concept of mastery expressed by Jerry in the River Montessori context and the talk on *What's Next After Montessori*. There was clear alignment of expectations for self-knowledge and character development. The prerecorded video captured former River Montessori student's personal experiences and showcased to myself and the other attendees what self-confidence developed by River Montessori guides and staff looked like. I was personally astounded by the sense of self exhibited by former students in this video. These students had a remarkable presence and understanding of who they were as people. They spoke

eloquently about their personal challenges as well as how River Montessori prepared them for their futures.

The Authentic Nature of the Child

Recognizing how River Montessori defined learning, as mastery, and the goal of education to be self-knowledge and confidence how did the school view the child? On the second page of the Community Handbook River Montessori referred to the child as someone having an “authentic nature.” When I asked Jerry to extrapolate on the authentic nature of the child he immediately referenced its origin in an excerpt from an original Montessori resource. Jerry made sense of how Montessori expressed the nature of the child as: (1) the child needed freedom to be who he or she was; (2) all children had an unbounded potential; and (3) the child formed ideas from mirroring the adult world and his or her peers.

According to Montessori (1967) “The child really learns only when he can exercise his own energies according to the mental procedure of nature” (p.52). This belief was reflective of her stance that the child’s biological imperative was to learn. Learning was the child’s natural inclination.

All that we know is that he has the highest potentialities, but we do not know what he will be. He must become incarnate with the help of his own will. (Montessori, 1966, p. 32)

Montessori was against ordinary schooling because she believed it was too easy for the child to hide. In ordinary schooling the child learned from the teacher, not from his own activity. She believed the child benefited by learning from his own activity, taking culture from the environment and not from the teacher.

Jerry explained what Montessori saw and discovered in the child from the scientific observation of children at work. The child interacted with the environment in a different way than the adult. Dr. Montessori discovered that in order for the child to act with his environment the furniture had to be child-sized. In addition, the child required the use of his or her hands and mind when experiencing the environment. Jerry explained his view of the authentic nature of the child with a direct reference to Dr. Montessori's method of pedagogy.

Jerry: That language [the authentic nature of the child] has its origin in Dr. Montessori's experience, which she writes about in many of her books where she just felt like over the years when she was with children in a certain way and observing children in environments that were developmentally appropriate to them and which they had the freedoms to be who they actually were versus fitting into some predetermined set of standards.

Jerry expressed how Montessorians viewed the child as capable of self-discovery even if this elevated view of the child was different from how the child viewed him or herself.

The goal of the guide was to appeal to the child's best self.

Jerry: Our perspective is that children do have within them something that's a potential, that's incredibly unbounded in many ways and that they, themselves are on a journey of who they are. They form ideas of who they are largely mirrored from the adult world and later from their peers.

This potential was named in the Montessori literature as a sensitive period. "A sensitive period refers to a special sensibility which a creature acquires in its infantile state, while

it is still in a process of evolution” (Montessori, 1966, p. 38). According to Montessori the child’s sensitive periods were temporal. Once an emerging trait or characteristic was acquired the sensibility disappeared making room for the next emerging trait. Dr. Montessori compared the sensitive periods of a child to sensitive periods in animals. One example shared was how a caterpillar was initially sensitive to light after birth and as a consequence the caterpillar inched its way toward the light, which in turn took him to his food source. This view of the child has been critiqued in the academic literature for being too passive. The assertion is without curricular structure orchestrated and timed by the teacher, children would not fulfill their academic potentials. Jerry was not concerned with this claim attacking the Montessori child’s accountability. He had confidence in the method and in the abilities of his guides to engage the child in thoughtful, meaningful work.

Jerry: If they’re [the children] not exploring and orienting, and communicating, and making symbols, and repeating, and perfecting skills and so forth on their own it’s because of some obstacle, typically that has been put in the way by the environment or by us.

It was clear from Jerry’s choice words and expressions of the authentic nature of the child River Montessori saw the child as someone who desired to learn. It was River Montessori’s responsibility to the child to free the environment of any deterrent to the child’s natural inclination to fulfill his timely sensitive periods.

Jerry ended our conversation on the authentic nature of the child with a comment about the child’s emotional capacity. He asserted Montessori believed the child was capable of a range of human moral sentiment. Children had courage, insight, and

compassion it was just not fully developed yet. He qualified this statement with how River Montessori did not psychoanalyze the child. As Jerry phrased it they did not work with “the core of the person, but the periphery.” It was not the responsibility of anyone at River Montessori to diagnose and label a child. River Montessori consulted with qualified psychiatrists when a need arose for a clinical assessment of the child.

River Montessori Policies and Procedures

As mentioned earlier by Jerry, River Montessori was well known in AMI circles as a school dedicated to authentic Montessori education. At this time, Jerry offered me River Montessori’s Community Handbook. He mentioned to me he had sent this Handbook to several countries upon request. Jerry’s opinion was it was better to share what worked for River Montessori with new Montessori schools, than to watch new schools make common mistakes they had already overcome as a campus in operation for over 45 years. He felt transparency of processes and procedures offered new schools the opportunity to learn from a veteran school with AMI accreditation. I even met a few Montessori professionals from other countries on campus observing in the lower elementary classrooms.

The River Montessori Community Handbook was thick, approximately 220 pages long. The Community Handbook revealed what the mission of the school was, how it was grounded in Montessori philosophy, social and emotional intelligence, and

synchronous school and home practices. As Jerry phrased it, the child's education did not stop and start when he arrived and was dismissed from school. The child's experience was continuous. The Handbook contained several articles and books the school used to support the way River Montessori thought about children, the environment, the role of the parent, and the role of the school community. The Handbook offered several suggestions to parents on literature to read to gain a deeper understanding of all theories operationalized at the school. They even provided suggestions for lunch, homework, and how to handle television and other video gaming devices at home. In addition, River Montessori had clear written expectations for whole school outings and smaller group research outings. The Handbook was thorough and precise. It knew what it expected, how it was going to reach these expectations, and everyone's role in the process.

In addition to the River Montessori Community Handbook, which is given to all staff and parents of River Montessori students, the school also had a Staff Handbook. Jerry offered me most of the Staff Handbook, removing a few items in the book upon the request of the school's lawyers. The Staff Handbook was the document that directly affected guides and the decisions they made in their classrooms. Like most Staff Handbooks River Montessori addressed classroom policies and classroom procedures. The River Montessori Staff Handbook even advised guides on items related to the prepared environment: how to set up a balanced aquarium, how to cut and arrange flowers, how to safely and appropriately move furniture, how elementary children create a theatrical play, as well as the role of potter's clay on the child's development and the

role of handwork like knitting and crocheting. The River Montessori elementary environment prided itself on providing children opportunities to perform practical life skills associated with adult life, work, and entertainment.

River Montessori desired to have large class sizes. A guide was encouraged to develop the skills necessary to support a larger number of children. Montessori schools place the child and the environment at the center of learning, thus more children was better than fewer. River Montessori believed a larger class size allowed the children to be more independent and self-motivated leading to true spontaneous activity. It was up to the guide to develop elaborate rituals and procedures for every aspect of classroom management and to assist the children in developing a self-managing community. In this study, Luke and Evan had very different classroom rituals and procedures. These will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Below are self-managing expectations for the elementary child directly from the Staff Handbook.

The elementary child will develop skills for:

1. Self-monitoring
2. Community monitoring
3. Peer mediation
4. Personal academic record keeping: the elementary child will be guided to plan, organize, and set up for their own parent conferences
5. Respect and care for their environment on a daily basis
6. Keep the calendar, plan the events, and prepare for observers
7. Keep an album of handouts divided by month so they can look ahead, plan for events, list preparations and supplies, and prepare handouts for proofing
8. Keep a bulletin board
9. Inventory supplies and restock when the school receives the supplies
10. Keep a notebook for repairs needed: the elementary child will use a form to record if they are pleased with the outcomes of the repair

River Montessori made the decision to place the elementary child in charge of tasks typically assumed to be duties and responsibilities of the teacher. The decision to place the child at the center of his environment was indicative of Jerry's claim that the child was capable of more than he or she was aware of. Dr. Montessori made this noticing in her first laboratory school where initially she contained all materials in closed and locked cabinets, until one day when she arrived late and children were already working. Montessori realized she must have left the cabinets unlocked and it was at this time she acknowledged this observation and saw the child's true potential for self-initiated and self-motivated work. She adjusted the location of the materials making them available at all times.

At River Montessori there was a strict policy to never reference any person in the Montessori environment as a "special teacher." In public schools a "special teacher" taught students the fine arts and physical education. At River Montessori there was no division between a special teacher or subject and the regular curriculum. All subjects, including art and music were to be a part of the curriculum.

The Prepared Environment

Montessori believed that man's psychic health needed balance and education was the path to psychic balance. Education for Dr. Montessori was a "social and human endeavor of interest to all. It must be based on psychology in order to safeguard the individuality

of the child” (Montessori, 1966, p. 14). When explaining man’s need for psychic balance Montessori referred to culture as well. She believed it was man’s right to know his real position in history. She was not in support of arbitrary curricula. She saw too many limitations with disconnected curricula, especially on enhancing one’s cultural experiences. Montessori felt the purpose of education was to serve others, to help man to know of his environment, and to teach him how to adapt. Order was viewed as a universal human tendency.

Order consists in recognizing the place for each object in relation to its environment and in remembering where each thing should be. This implies that one is able to orient one’s self within one’s environment and to dominate it in all its details. The proper environment of the soul is one in which an individual can move about with eyes closed and find, simply by reaching out his hand, anything he desires. Such an environment is necessary for peace and happiness. (Montessori, 1966, p. 53)

The guides at River Montessori were responsible for creating the proper environment for the child. From the Community and Staff Handbooks it was obvious the school had high expectations for the environment within which the Montessori child interacted and learned. The school founder even wrote an essay in the Staff Handbook entitled *Preparing the Environment*. At River Montessori guides were instructed to have a prepared environment and also to make changes to that environment for novelty’s sake.

The child’s thrust is toward perfection. The environment I provide supports and blocks the child’s development toward perfection. I am the greatest support and obstacle to the child’s development. To the degree that I work through the environment, I tend to give support. To the degree that I work directly on the child, I tend to present an obstacle. Relationship is the most potent offering I can make to the child. The highest relationship I can offer the child is to observe him and link him to the environment. Through this relationship I say to the child, “I know your mysteries and powers are beyond my understanding. I trust your drive to overcome obstacles and develop your own best adult.

River Montessori saw the guide as a liaison to the child in charge of a developed environment, an environment that culled the child to act out of interest and need. The adult was not encouraged to come between the child and the environment. I wondered how the guide was to create such an environment reducing the number of obstacles and not interrupting the child's interaction with it? As I read on in the Handbook I noticed Deb answered this question directly.

When we set up the environment, we do so for the children's particular plane of development. Then we vary and extend this environment according to the particular children in the community. We vary and extend this environment according to the particular season. We keep the environment dynamic by changing the esthetic objects and the art on the walls at least every six weeks. We vary and extend the environment according to the shifting interests of the group and their every-changing development. We say to the children in our heart of hearts, "You who are separated from nature and placed in the confines of four walls in my care, may this space be worthy of your development."

The school asked the guide to watch the children in the classroom community, to study their movements, actions, and speech. The guide then accessed this observational data to refine the details of the environment supporting the child's developmental needs, as well as the needs of the community as a whole.

The Montessori Guide

According to River Montessori, the guide was a scientist. This was expected since Dr. Montessori positioned the guide in the role of a scientist. After all she had a personal connection to the field of science, which informed her educational theories and practices.

The guide was to apply the scientific technique of “indirect intervention” allowing the natural development of the child to be expressed and experienced in an obstacle free environment. The guide’s role was to observe, prepare, offer, and then watch always looking for obstacles to remove. This quality, of being a scientist with the ability to observe and interact with precision and purpose, inspired me to ask the founder how she made decisions when choosing whom to hire as an elementary guide at River Montessori. Deb, River Montessori’s founder, expressed to me River Montessori looked for self-motivated people. People who knew who they were and could stand alone, but could also be apart of a larger community. She also mentioned the choice to select people in search of enlightenment.

Enlightenment was defined as the action or state of attaining or having attained spiritual knowledge or insight, in particular in Buddhism that awareness which frees a person from the cycle of rebirth (New Oxford American Dictionary, 2007). It fascinated me that River Montessori did not shy away from a religious word like enlightenment. However, it did not come as a surprise since Dr. Montessori was a devote Catholic and her religious beliefs greatly impacted her philosophy and desire to make and keep peace. She wrote many articles and books about peace education. At River Montessori every year for the last five years or so the school held a peace march on 4/20 to celebrate peace. I witnessed preparations for the peace march where students came to school on 4/19 with healthful snacks, flags, flowers, and large slabs of cardboard. The guides assisted the children in making signs to wear on their chests and flags to drape from broomsticks to

march around the campus with as they stopped into each community to hug, embrace, and sing songs of peace.

There was a connection between the concept of enlightenment and a section of the Staff Handbook as well entitled *Working with Children and Parents: The Teacher's Preparation* from *The Absorbent Mind*, by Dr. Montessori. Montessori believed the guide must be:

...Attractive, pleasing in appearance, tidy, clean, calm, and defined...the teacher's appearance is the first step to gaining the child's confidence and respect. The teacher should study her own movements, to make them as gentle and graceful as possible.

I believed this type of self-awareness was part of what Deb referred to as enlightenment. She wanted guides who were working toward his or her individual betterment, as well as the betterment of the greater world.

River Montessori extended beyond appearance, movements, and grace and courtesy with children. They were selective with their word choice when speaking to children. This was evident in the section entitled *Choosing Our Words* also in the Staff Handbook. River Montessori stated how important it was to choose one's words carefully and from a place and understanding of child development, staying away from language reflective of rewards and punishments.

Concerning our use of language to discuss children and our work with them let us consider that language not only expresses our thoughts, it forms them and packages them. Our thoughts must be fit into language in order to be given to others. Language is the framework within which our thinking has been developed. It is not easy to break out of the limits of language to re-conceive and reinvent our vision of humanity. Language is a grid through which we see reality. It is difficult to see other than what we have been taught to see through language.

Language has taught us how to think, what to think, and what to value. We are at once set free to develop our intelligence by language and trapped within it.

River Montessori concluded with language had power and deserved respect. The school showed respect for language by taking the time to think clearly and select words deliberately.

River Montessori also enacted outside resources to inform their language choices when commenting on students work. Evan, one of the two lower elementary guides in this study named a resource given to him by River Montessori entitled *The Compassionate Classroom*. This book used Marshall Rosenberg's theory of non-violent communication in a school setting. The goal of non-violent communication was to make statements to children based on observational data free from judgments. Instead of judging the work of a child the guide would tell them what they saw and respond with a statement of feeling. If the work produced by the child was subpar the guide found a way to question an aspect of the work that would allow the child to revisit the areas of weakness. By commenting on children's work with detailed observations and providing time for reflection and rewrites the guide was supporting River Montessori's perspective on learning, it was a process.

Discipline

River Montessori approached the misbehaving child in a unique way. In the Staff Handbook it was clearly stated that the school did not support the notion of misbehaving

or even the act of being bad. Instead the school preferred to express the child's misbehaviors as "having a hard time." According to River Montessori "having a hard time" was reasonable and understandable. River Montessori did not place blame on the child, but on the relationships and the environment, and how in some way, at that moment, a reciprocal part of the system was not serving the child's needs. "We might say things are out of kilter for the child, or the child is out of harmony with others, or the child is showing distress." The school did not support the use of typical infractions like suspension or referrals, instead they recognized that at times a child may be asked to stay home until all parties involved determined how the environment and relationships at home and at school could be improved to better meet the child's needs.

Jerry also stated how Deb's book *Children Who Are Not Yet Peaceful: Preventing Exclusion in the Early Elementary Classroom* served as an operationalized theory of social development at River Montessori. Lower elementary guides were encouraged to consult this book for strategies to try when faced with a child expressing negative emotions, behaviors, or relationships with peers. The book was written with many vignettes of specific children River Montessori had nourished to a place of psychic balance. The overall advice in the book was to approach the child as someone in need looking for a way to satisfy a developing quality in his or her personality. The guide was to observe what in the environment could be causing irritation to the child and then find a way for the child to satisfy his or her need, but in a healthful way.

River Montessori also provided the lower elementary classrooms with mediation packets to facilitate dialogue between peers when disagreements occurred. Jerry

developed these packets as a tool for children to use when there was a conflict or, as Jerry called it, a difference of perspective. The packets contained quoted dialogue for each person involved in the conflict to read. River Montessori developed precise language for the guide's and the children to use during the conflict resolution process. For example, mediator card number one said:

This situation is too heated. Let's sit down together and work it out. (Wait until everyone is sitting down). Let's mediate this situation. I'll be the mediator. Here is how it goes. Each person gets to tell what happened from his or her perspective. Only one person will speak at a time...

The dialogue represented what the mediator would say and how to facilitate the creation of the right environment to have equitable conversations. After the guide set the ground rules for how each member of the community would communicate with each other during times of difference the children shared his or her perspective of what happened and how it made them feel. It was important to keep in mind that in the Montessori prepared environment it was the job of the guide to remove obstacles for free expression.

The mediation packets represented one way River Montessori removed the obstacle of where, how, and why to communicate at times of difference. The booklets were designed to model how to approach a time of difference with peers without the presence of the adult. Children would practice listening to their peers' perspectives even if they ran counter to their own. The mediation packet was cut out and organized by color. Each person involved would hold his or her cards, placed in sequential order, allowing for easy navigation. Jerry informed me the packets were meant to support what

students wanted to say, so the dialogue could, and likely would vary. He mentioned that overtime the mediation packets were used less, as the children knew, from practice, how to communicate more effectively with one another.

Communication with Families

Jerry expressed the value of transparent communication with all families of River Montessori children. One tool for communication was the weekly River Montessori newsletter, which the school chose to send via email. This newsletter provided families with information about events and opportunities, as well as excerpts from various guides employed by River Montessori.

Before children became a member of the River Montessori community parents were encouraged to attend four different parent education nights. The purpose of these nights was to inform parents of the practices at River Montessori. Jerry believed it was important for families to know what type of pedagogy they were agreeing to before they enrolled their child. River Montessori had specific expectations for how their campuses made decisions about the environment, the child, as well as the role of the guide and family. The belief was that a child's education was continuous, so the family needed to understand how to enable a prepared environment at home for the child, complete with discipline practices supportive of how the guide might handle a situation named "a hard time."

In addition, in the River Montessori Staff Handbook there was a document for families entitled *Elementary Home Environment Review*. This was a four-paragraph review the school developed to share with parents their notion of the family unit. River Montessori believed the home environment supported the developmental needs of the child, just as the prepared environment in the classroom did. In this essay, River Montessori noted:

The making of a family is an art, not a science, and if science is to make a contribution, it must be offered to the living system of the family as nourishment to be selected from and taken in at will...

After defining the family unit River Montessori established expectations for how they communicated with parents. What was ascertained from this section was River Montessori desired for families to be receptive to their “heartfelt desire to be of service” to the children and families they served. They understood that at times it was challenging to hear certain information about their child. They sided with families and the children recognizing “we each do the best we can.”

River Montessori wished to create positive rapport with families up front. They wanted to be transparent with what parents could expect from the school in relation to their children and their view of the family unit. At the end of the review River Montessori invited families to familiarize themselves with aspects of child rearing supported by the school. They even asked families to answer a questionnaire at their own comfort level, so that the school got to know more about the needs, culture, and circumstances of each unique family unit. River Montessori did not require families to

fill out and return the form, instead they gave families the choice to make the decision to turn it into the guide depending on if they felt it was helpful information for him to know.

Chapter V: What Defining Characteristics Operated in the Decision-Making of Lower Elementary Montessori Guides?

In this chapter I discuss what characteristics operated in the decision-making of the two lower elementary Montessori guides in this study. I begin by discussing the themes that emerged in Luke and Evan's daily decision-making. The three (3) key themes that emerged from the data with regards to what operated in the guides decision-making were: (1) Association Montessori Internationale training (AMI); (2) guide improvisation based on student observation; and (3) school ideology.

Theme One: Association Montessori Internationale Training (AMI)

The first theme that emerged concerning what operated in the decision-making of lower elementary guides in this study was the influence of their AMI training. Both Luke and Evan made daily decisions in their classrooms based on the knowledge, skills, and experiences they acquired at their three-summer AMI training course. AMI training operated in four (4) ways for the guides in this study, including: (1) memorizing and referring to their Montessori AMI albums; (2) presenting key lessons; (3) recognizing the importance of human tendencies; and (4) valuing the role of work.

Influence of AMI Training

Memorizing and Referring to their Montessori AMI Albums

Cossentino (2009) researched Montessori teacher training practices and the impact such training had on the Montessori guides. She noted:

The course itself was, and continues to be, made up of a series of lectures (both theoretical and practical) and demonstrations focused on how to use the didactic materials (p. 521).

She expressed how becoming a Montessorian required a “transformation of outlook” toward childhood and human development. Montessori schools placed the child at the center of control and the teacher on the periphery responsible for preparing an environment appropriate for the developing child. The Montessori guide did not stand in front of a group of children and captivate them with knowledge packaged to reach all children at once. The Montessori guide watched the child and selectively chose work for that child based on emerging needs in that child’s specific sensitive period.

Montessori training was not a time for the guide to act as the Montessori child. There was no freedom with responsibility, exploration, discovery, or unique individual needs based on the guides emerging understanding of the Montessori methodology. The aim of Montessori teacher training was the transmission of the method. The trainer had the knowledge and his or her goal was to feed it to the trainee. The trainee received the

method and spent most of his time scripting, memorizing, and practicing the lessons as dictated by the experienced trainer.

There are some 2,000 discrete lessons making up the elementary curriculum, and the bulk of training consists of recording the precise sequence and procedures of those lessons as they are dictated and demonstrated by trainers. (Cossentino, 2009, p. 522)

Both Luke and Evan mentioned the lesson transcription process. They recorded every word of each lower elementary key lesson into a notebook as the trainer presented the lessons using the didactic materials. Then, they went home and rewrote the lessons, which they later submitted to the trainer for a final stamp of approval. In addition, each guide had to pass oral examinations where trainers randomly chose a lesson for the guide to teach, while they judged its delivery, clarity, and the overall experience.

The transcribed lessons were the lower elementary Montessori guide's curriculum. Guides were required to memorize all of the 2,000 plus lessons and they were taught how to observe a child's readiness for each lesson.

In addition to album making, supervised practice, and practice teaching, students also spend between 40 and 100 hours (depending on the course) observing in Montessori classrooms. For Montessori teachers, observation anchors practice; lessons are offered based on the teachers' assessment of the child's readiness, which is based on observed behavior. (Cossentino, 2009, p. 522)

I wondered how these scripted albums, containing over 2,000 lessons in fifteen different subject content areas, affected how Luke and Evan made day-to-day instructional decisions.

Nathalie: Was this [the composition of albums] something that you felt was important as a learner in learning this new pedagogy, this new Montessori philosophy?

Luke: Yes, it is incredibly important. For the Montessori guide it is our constant reference for sequence of the lessons we are providing to the children. It allows us to be able to see all the different parallels that are going on within the classroom. A tremendous portion of it is also theory-based. So there is a lot about the psychological and different physical characteristics of the child. What we can be looking for? What we are hoping to establish? There are hundreds of pages of direct lessons, which are step-by-step lessons, which are essential when you initially begin teaching. Often I would have them [the albums] close by. I would prepare the night before, just reading over them, but I also had them close by, so I could reference them, look at them. Even now sometimes I bring them out when I am giving my lessons, as a reference as well.

Luke explained how every Montessori guide had a theory album. The theory album contained information on human beings and the tendencies associated with being human, the four stages of development, cosmic education, imagination, the great lessons, the key lessons, the act of going out, observation for the guide, freedom with responsibility, record keeping, parent education, running an elementary community, planning your first three days for the first year as a guide, and the need for children to work.

Presenting Key Lessons

Key lessons represent the lower elementary Montessori curriculum. Both Luke and Evan learned the 2,000 plus key lessons comprising the lower elementary curriculum from their AMI trainer. These lessons were not printed and contained in folders for the guides. Luke and Evan handwrote all key lessons as the trainer presented the lesson as if to the child. Luke and Evan explained their decision-making behind using a key lesson structure to teach the children in their classrooms. They shared the same perspective

about the key lesson claiming it was developmentally appropriate for the 6-9 year-old-child in the second plane of development. According to AMI and Montessori, the second plane of development was a place where the child needed collaborative experience with peers and the ability to strengthen his or her imagination.

A key lesson was told in story format. The lesson used simple language revealing key facts but never telling the child too much. According to Jerry, the Elementary Coordinator, Dr. Montessori referred to the lower elementary key lesson as “necessary and sufficient.” Luke and Evan explained the goal of the key lesson was to allow the child to connect to the key facts in a natural way. For the child to be left wondering something related to the key facts. The guide was taught to honor the child’s unique ideas, connections, and curiosities allowing the child to discover for himself after the key lesson through independent research. The key lesson was a conscious deliberate decision made by Luke and Evan to spark a child’s interest through his or her imagination.

I was unaware of the term key lessons before my observations and interviews with Luke and Evan. I had always expressed the lesson structure as the Three-Period Lesson (Seldin & Epstein, 2003). I asked Luke if he had heard of the Montessori lesson experience being called the Three Period Lesson. He stated this term was used in his AMI training, however it typically referred to a lesson experience for the primary child in the first stage of development. Luke was able to extend the notion of the Three Period Lesson into the second plane of development.

Luke: [The Three-Period Lesson] It is very explicit in the Children’s House (primary 3-6 classroom). Where you would give a presentation of the materials, so for an angle you would say, “This is a right angle. This is an acute angle. This

is an obtuse angle.” You give the children the information. Then you ask for them to point. So you say, “Point to the right angle. Point to the obtuse angle.” This is a second period. “Point to the straight angle.” This is all spread out over a period of time in Children’s House.... Then the third period, where you say, “Show me. What is this?”

I had the opportunity to observe and record several key lessons given by Luke and Evan. During one particular stimulated recall session I asked Evan to elaborate upon the structure of a key lesson he had given using the grammar didactic materials. Evan’s response positioned where in the Language Arts content knowledge this grammar lesson took place. Montessori key lessons are given in a particular order from least complicated to more advanced, from simple to complex.

The lesson Evan described below had structure, but the goal was not control it was organization. His choice to teach a grammar lesson was based on previous grammar lessons taught. He made the decision to teach this child this grammar lesson based on the psychological indicators he had been trained to identify in his AMI training. Something in the way this child behaved told Evan he was ready for this key lesson in grammar.

Evan: All of the grammar boxes have a particular focus, so a set of grammar boxes might focus on the verb. Another grammar box is going to focus on the preposition, and another conjunctions and so forth. But the first have to do with the article and nouns and there’s a box dealing with singular and plural. There’s another box for masculine and feminine, common gender and so then we get to the adjectives. We’re still using the articles. We’re still using nouns, but now we’re into words that describe.

Montessori key lessons were given to one child or a small gathering of children. Evan sat across from his small gathering of children at a table of choice in the room. Evan began the lesson using his preferred game format and his knowledge of the material of the Montessori curriculum, as well as the scripted key lesson learned from his AMI training

program. Below was how Evan retold the key lesson grammar story to his students who were learning about nouns for the first time.

Evan: You know humans love to name things. They name their children. They name their pets. They name cities and states. We just love to name books, name poems, what else do we like to name? Some people even name their instruments and their cars and their boats, the streets, we just love naming the plants, all of these things! But, I wonder if there is something in this room that doesn't have a name? So they'll walk around the room and they'll look for it and then some children will come up to me and they'll have a little piece of lint. That's lint. A little dirt. That's dirt. Eventually someone will say everything has a name!

The key lessons were stories learned by Luke and Evan from the AMI trainer at their prospective three-summer Montessori institutes. Luke and Evan explained the key lesson structure was selected for the lower elementary child based on the child's emerging need for collaboration and the use of his or her imagination. Thus, Luke and Evan were responsible for recognizing the emerging needs of each child in their lower elementary classroom. Once they decided which need was developing they taught the child the key lessons that would develop that skill or competence. The above narrative is representative of the key lesson story structure. Evan began the lesson with an observation. He supported his observation with key facts. Then, he posed a question and allowed the children to explore and discover.

Recognizing the Importance of Human Tendencies

Both Luke and Evan referenced the concept of human tendencies often when I asked them about the decisions they made as Montessori guides in their lower elementary

Montessori classrooms. Luke explained how Montessori was big into anthropology and observing children as they worked and developed. What she noticed was the power of providing free expression of human tendencies. Luke interpreted the human tendencies within the context of developmentally appropriate practices for the child of 6 to 9 years old. Evan interpreted the human tendencies within the context of shared human fundamental needs.

After Luke mentioned the role human tendencies played in his daily decision-making I immediately thought of Lillard (1972) whom deduced 6 main tenets of Montessori education based off of Montessori's original works and lectures. I asked Luke if he had heard of Lillard's six main tenets of Montessori education: (1) freedom with responsibility; (2) beauty and atmosphere; (3) nature; (4) the didactic materials; (5) a community of learners; and (6) structure and order. Luke was not aware of this particular list of main tenets, however he immediately made connections.

Luke: Those [Lillard's six main tenets] are certainly ones that we would subscribe to here and would be key for us as well...I think my point of view is what we are really doing is trying to be with children in a way that's totally as developmental as possible in the sense that everything that we do we should look at from a lens of how does this help this particular child or child of this age? How does it help their development as whole human beings, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical? So, I would look to things like the human tendencies that came out of Montessori's work as things that would be real guiding principles.

Luke suggested deconstructing Lillard's six main tenets of Montessori, which he believed would likely result in a list of human tendencies. According to Luke the human tendencies were dependent upon the developmental plane of the child. One Montessori human tendency for the lower elementary child was order.

Luke: In the elementary there is still the need to express and develop order in the psyche but it moves from expression in the outside world more inward...there's now ordering of ideas and their sense of order is really related to understanding ideas and figuring out the universe.

Evan also shared insight with me about the role of human tendencies and how this notion informed decisions he made in his lower elementary classroom. He discussed shared human tendencies and the need for students to feel a sense of belonging and community with other humans near and far, in the present and the past. This particular conversation was about the coming of life, also referred to as the coming of human beings. Evan explained the goal of this lesson was to bring students' attention to how humans are alike and different. Evan explained to the children how humans lived in different environments, with different needs, but all humans have shared fundamental needs that made them human.

Evan: We might start off by saying did you have breakfast this morning? And you're dressed in clothing. How did we get here? So, we have these fundamental needs for nourishment, for shelter, for protection, and its really interesting because we talk about protection, we talk about protection sometimes as this view of shields and clubs all these really incredible weapons for hurting. Sometimes protection is also washing your hands. Sometimes protection is washing what we eat. That is a form of protection.

Evan's choice words for human life and existence showed respect for all humans. He named the qualities of humans as "gifts humans have" including the ability to love, to use our hands, and our imaginations. He spoke from an informed place, as a trained AMI guide dedicated to Montessori education where the hand was the vehicle for the imagination. The hand was the tool used to construct and create.

The human tendency known in the Montessori paradigm as freedom with responsibility was present in both Luke and Evan's classrooms. Although they did not identify this human tendency in our interviews or stimulated recall sessions its presence was apparent in the children's actions. In both Luke and Evan's classrooms the children were free to move around the room with purpose. Purposeful action was particularly salient in the actions of the children before and after lunchtime. In each guide's classroom there was a particular expectation for students to follow when preparing for lunch and when cleaning up after lunch. Each guide made the decision to place the children at the center of the responsibility for their plates, leftover food, and the cleaning of their personal space. This choice supported the human tendency freedom with responsibility.

Although Luke and Evan did not name 6 human tendencies, like the 6 main tenets of Montessori expressed by Lillard (1972), they did mention 2 that influenced their decision-making on a daily basis and I observed 1 in my classroom observations: (1) the need for order; (2) the need to learn about shared fundamental needs of all human beings; and (3) freedom with responsibility. When I asked them the origin of their thinking about the need for human tendencies both referenced their AMI training and stated human tendencies was a chapter in their theory album.

Valuing the Role of Work

According to Luke and Evan developing children's self-directed, self-initiated, and sustained work was the goal of Montessori education. Work was a Montessori concept dependent upon the act of normalization. When a child was "normalized" he had learned how to choose work that was developmentally appropriate and the result of his unique, timely sensitive period. The child's ability to choose appropriate work was intricately intertwined with Luke and Evan's decision-making process. The key lessons told to the child were dependent upon Luke and Evan's ability to observe the child with acute awareness for his or her readiness for certain skills and competencies. This was the link between Luke and Evan's decision-making about work and their AMI training. AMI training included many hours of observation within lower elementary classrooms with experienced guides. They had the opportunity to watch and then ask the experienced guides about the decisions they made leading up to selecting a certain key lesson for any given child.

Once children had been given a key lesson they were invited to engage in that key lesson at their own free will. When a child was engaged in work he had the ability to start a task and work through the task to completion, often choosing to repeat the task because doing so satisfied an intrinsic need. Both Luke and Evan had their own strategies for assisting children to connect with their work. Luke mentioned the role of routines in helping students to reach a normalized state, while Evan confessed that some of his children thought of work as a negative concept because they had heard their

parents or society position work as a bad thing. Evan challenged this negative notion of work and made work seem like a game.

For a Montessori outsider the term “normalized” may be an uncomfortable concept. For Luke and Evan it meant the child was learning how to self-initiate, concentrate, sustain work until completion, and work collaboratively and productively with others. Luke emphasized the need for the non-normalized child to have established, predictable routines in the classroom.

Luke: The children require and need work. That’s what makes it hum. We’ve got a lot of different rituals and grace and courtesy here, but without work and connecting children to these works through stories, through the materials, their intellect wouldn’t be able to be developed.

Both Luke and Evan followed the River Montessori classroom daily schedule: a three-hour uninterrupted work period in the morning, lunch, recess, and an afternoon work period. All children expected this daily schedule every day.

Luke made decisions to support peer communication in order to create opportunities for the normalized child to engage in meaningful work experiences. Luke also expressed the need to keep the non-normalized child close when he or she was unable to fulfill the need for work. He chose to give more lessons to the non-normalized child. The decision to keep the non-normalized child close would imply that the normalized child had less time with the Montessori guide. In the Montessori environment at River Montessori less time with the guide was a positive outcome.

AMI training supportive of Dr. Montessori’s methodology trained Luke and Evan to help the child develop independence. The underlying notion of the independent child

was that only the child had knowledge of what he or she needed at any developmental stage. It was the guide's responsibility to study the child and recognize which work aligned best with the developing qualities in the child at that particular time. Again, AMI training placed Luke and Evan at the periphery and the child at the center of his or her own education.

Like Luke, Evan made decisions about how to prepare the child for work. Evan recognized some children had negative experiences with the word work and how it was his responsibility to create a positive experience between children and their work.

Evan: I feel sometimes I do use the word work and we talk about you know it's fun to work. But, I feel like sometimes the children hear the word work in maybe other environments and they have this relationship with the word that isn't always positive. I'm trying to change that. I have so much work. I was at work late. Beginning to kind of view this word in not a positive way, so often times I'll replace it with a synonym. I have something I want to show you, like a game. It's almost like a game. I wonder if we can find right angles in the classroom and here's something that can help you and I give them a little device. It's a laminated piece of cardstock and it is cut out as a right angle and they can hold it against the tile of the floor, against the window pane, so it becomes a game but then again in hindsight we talk about the work we did.

Evan's approach for the non-normalized child was to change his perspective about the concept of work. He noticed that the societal curriculum or notion of work was inhibiting the child from choosing to connect deeply with the work. He chose to turn the concept of work into a game. He would wonder aloud about something and then challenge the children to find the answer.

According to Luke self-directed engagement with work was a process for the child, it happened on his or her own timeline for each individual child. Luke made decisions to model and provide opportunities for the child to communicate effectively

with his peers and also for the child to communicate his understanding of the curriculum with follow-up practice. He felt that giving the child the means to work collaboratively assisted the child in his or her normalization process because he noticed the lower elementary aged children enjoyed working with one another. However, Luke was quick to recognize how initially it was frustrating for other children to interact with a child who was not yet able to sustain work. He explained how he made the decision to let his students know they could always come to him if they got to a point or they were getting to a threshold that didn't feel very fun anymore.

Luke followed this statement with a personal goal he had in his classroom—to create the opportunity for as many positive experiences around the non-normalized child and his peers as possible. He had this goal in mind because he wanted the children working with the non-normalized child to have a positive reflection about the activities and actions performed with this child. He made the decision to help the non-normalized child to be remembered as a good work partner, so others would continue to invite that child to work with him or her in the future. He did not want the non-normalized child to be remembered as a poor, frustrating partner.

According to Luke and Evan the goal of Montessori education was to create a child with independence that had the intrinsic motivation and initiative to engage in the Montessori work without the presence of the guide. They learned the value of work in their AMI training. Specific attention was given to the new to the classroom or non-normalized child, as this child needed more time and attention from the guide in order to

develop the self-discipline and connection necessary to be successful in the lower elementary Montessori classroom.

Theme Two: Guide Improvisation Based on Student Observation

The second theme that emerged concerning the decision-making of the two lower elementary guides in this study was guide improvisation based on student observation. Both Luke and Evan were AMI trained to read and respond to the real time needs of all of their children. The operational definition of guide improvisation for this study is decisions made by Luke and Evan in the moment based on students' comments, connections, wonderings, and experiences. Guide improvisation based on student observation occurred in two (2) ways for the guides in this study, including (1): inviting children to key lessons; and (2) using follow-up suggestions to conclude key lessons.

Invitations to Lessons

Luke and Evan invited their children to join a key lesson. This was a practice they learned from their AMI trainer, as well as from observing veteran Montessori guides in their own lower elementary classrooms. How Luke and Evan invited children to lessons was dependent upon student observation. They would often listen to the child or watch

the child and make a connection between what the child said or did in relation to the work.

Luke and Evan agreed with Dr. Montessori's perspective that the child's biological imperative was to learn. The child was never coaxed or instructed to learn they were invited to learn and attend key lessons. The child interacted freely with the materials and work he or she had experienced under the guide's watchful eye. Watching how the guide make decisions about which key lessons to offer on any given day and which students to extend that offer to was much like how a plate spinner sets the plate on top and spins it, first vigorously, and once in motion ever so gently at just the right time.

I observed Evan and Luke make timely, improvised decisions about how to greet students using this moment with the child for a potential work exchange. This was particularly salient in how Evan made decisions about how to greet students. Evan referred to this thought process as constantly trying to find ways to connect children's experiences outside of school to experiences in the classroom. Luke also mentioned the value of applying the language of work to student's prior experience or experiences outside of school to the work and key lessons. He believed applying the language of the key lessons and work to the child's background knowledge was a necessary connection required for learning acquisition.

Evan: I had a child that went to Switzerland and we had an opportunity to talk about well let's look at the geography of Switzerland. Let's look at...let's look at this cause you might see this. Let's look at a hanging valley, a hanging u-shaped valley, glaciers, things that they are probably not going to see a lot of in Central Texas. If it is Hawaii, let's talk about Hawaii, so we will do a little investigation in their books or in the encyclopedia. If there is a family into landscaping, I had a

child whose mom had her own landscaping business so we talked about plants quite a bit. The types of leaves, are these parallel veins or are these lateral veins?

Evan made decisions to ask students what was going on in his or her world. He then used this information as an opportunity to connect the child's out of school interests to the work of the curriculum and key lessons. In addition, Evan mentioned how he made decisions to initiate a work experience opportunity by noticing something as it happened.

Evan: I'll go outside and I will notice someone is looking at something outside and I will say what are you looking at? There is a woodpecker there. Oh my goodness, do you know what kind of woodpecker that is? Already just planting the idea there's variations. Let's look into that. Let's get the binoculars. Find a way for it to be fun but also be an opportunity to learn. I feel like I am constantly, constantly trying to find ways to connect whatever it is that we are seeing or observing, that they are saying, into something purposeful.

Evan was quick to recognize that not all of the decisions he made to connect what the child did or saw to the work of the curriculum took hold. Sometimes students denied his invitation for exploration. However, sometimes these ideas and exchanges stuck and became thoughtful engagements with the work. Evan said it was much like throwing seeds out and seeing which ones took.

In Evan's classroom students did not even have to come to a lesson they were invited to.

Evan: I always like to invite the children [to lessons] and often times they'll come but if they are really engaged in something else instead of leaving that door closed I'll say, "Will you be available in ten minutes? Twenty minutes?" Because often times there are other children who are ready for that presentation and angles especially, since you are given a tool to explore with, it can be presented at any time.

I witnessed Evan being rejected by two students when he invited them to go on a nature walk where Evan intended to present the way water traveled on various types of leaves.

Imagine two children sitting at a round table in the middle of the room surrounded by shelves with didactic material. Evan approached the two girls as they engaged with different work at the same table. He invited them to come with him on a nature walk. When he saw their lack of interest he told them it was okay if they did not want to come now. He followed this exclamation with, “maybe later.”

Luke invited children to key lessons based on his observation of students as well. He explained it as looking for that moment when he could really see that the child had been inspired or intrigued by something in the classroom or outside and taking advantage of this moment by encouraging the child to learn more.

Luke made decisions to be led to the work and key lessons by student interest. He recognized that children responded to the same lesson differently and he honored this difference by listening to what connections they made and creating opportunities for the children to follow through with their personal connections through research and the work. Luke told me of a time when a child led interest resulted in a connection to the Montessori work. This work had to do with observing a flower, drawing the flower, and writing observations made.

Luke: The day before we had a picnic outside and some children were walking past and they noticed that our amaryllis had bloomed. We had been noticing it blooming over the course of the week and the children have been monitoring it. I think it [the lesson] just started with a discussion where they were under the belief that somebody had cut it off because it cleanly snapped away. That it must have been done with intention.

Luke described how this observation led to conversations about intent and wonderings about what might have caused the flower to break so cleanly? Could it have been the

wind or was it indeed a person? He went on to explain how the children decided to retain the flower and bring it inside placing it in a glass vase with water. The flower then became the centerpiece on a table. The following morning Luke made the decision to gather a group of children together to work with the flower the children had brought into the room. Luke desired to take advantage of the interest in the flower in the context of the work and key lessons. In this case he decided to teach a lesson on writing development using the flower as the object or subject of the writing key lesson. Luke made the conscious choice to include children with practice writing observations and children without practice writing observations. He explained how he started the lesson with this group below.

Luke: So, we started just talking about how to paint a picture of this object rather than using lines, straight lines or curved lines, or color, we are going to use our words. And then we enter into a dialogue about what it is that they see and then we write it down.

Luke explained how at this point in the year all of the children involved in this lesson had already done work in botany. They knew about leaves and the parts of a flower so he would be sure to pull in these key lesson terms during the experience.

Luke and Evan relied upon the observation of students' comments, connections, wonderings, and experiences when making decisions about how to invite children to key lessons. Luke and Evan would look for opportunities to connect students' out of school experiences to key lessons in the three-year lower elementary curriculum. In addition, both guides awaited opportunities to connect what the child saw, wondered about, or questioned into something purposeful.

Follow-Up Work Suggestions

How Luke and Evan offered follow-up suggestions after key lessons was similar to the decisions they made when inviting students to lessons. They would observe the children during the key lesson and look for interest, wonderings, or connections to the lesson. After the child showed an interest in an aspect of the key lesson Luke and Evan would offer follow-up suggestions related to each child's interest. Again, this required Luke and Evan to listen attentively and watch carefully for opportunities when the child showed a connection or had a wondering. Next, they would improvise and share follow-up work related to the child's connections and wonderings, which would be performed individually or with others.

Evan offered follow-up suggestions after giving his key lessons by offering students several options to practice the skills of the lessons related to their individual connections and wonderings about the concepts shared in the lesson. The children did not have to choose all or even any of these follow-up suggestions, but offering them allowed Evan to extend the key lesson into the child's interests and connections. Evan explained sometimes the child connected to the lesson in a unique way and the child came up with a relevant follow-up activity himself.

Evan presented a key lesson on parts of a mountain to a small group of students. He invited them to the lesson by asking if they wanted to work with him. The lesson had

nomenclature cards with pictures and definitions. Evan held up each card and defined the part of the mountain highlighted on the card.

Evan: A peak is a pointed top of a mountain. There may be one or there may be many. A ridge is a row of peaks connected by...the summit is the highest part of a mountain. Exercise your mind. The slope is the side of the mountain. If I were to cover up the definition could you give me a definition? What is the summit? What is your definition? What about the base? How would you define it?

After the key lesson component of the interaction where Evan named the parts of the mountain and students responded to his questions Evan ended the lesson with follow-up work options.

Evan: Now what you could do is draw your own mountain and identify the parts. If you feel responsible you could make a clay mountain and place tooth picks in it...or you could find out the five highest mountains in North America.

After a key lesson with nouns and adjectives Evan offered the following suggestions to the three students at this lesson experience:

Evan: You can pick some of these and find words to describe them. You could write them down. They live to describe. That is their cosmic quest. Do you want to work together? [He makes togetherness with his hands.] Well, I am moving on. Sounds like a beginning of a poem. You could do that also...have fun.

I observed Evan take three students outside and to a loquat tree near the office. One student had a basket and another a stepping stool. While outside with the children picking loquats Evan offered follow-up work based on his observations of students interests and actions.

Evan: [As a student climbs the stepping stool.] Maybe you are going to be an astronaut. You seem to be very comfortable with heights...maybe we can look at one of these leaves and look up maple and properly identify it?

It was customary for Luke and Evan to offer follow-up work to the child. When I asked Luke and Evan how they made decisions about which follow-up work to offer they both mentioned how they used their observations of children, as well as their knowledge of the experiences the child has had both in and out of school to decide.

Luke also used similar strategies to Evan's to stimulate children's connection to their work. I witnessed Luke connecting multiplication work begun on the multiplication checkerboard didactic material to a context more familiar and amenable for his students.

Luke: If one person were to collect 3,624 crystals outside. How many crystals would 34 people collect? You had 3,624 muffins. Inside each muffin there were 34 blueberries.

After a coming of life great lesson Luke overheard a student from the lesson interested in doing a project about human beings. He offered the following suggestions to the child:

Luke: Do you want to write about the outside of the body? The skeleton? Do you want to write about the inside of the body? Do you want to write about how it moves?

I also witnessed Luke guiding students follow-up work related to the human brain and its job.

Luke: What are some things your brain controls? Your brain controls your body. You said it controls the way that you move. You think your brain sends your body a signal that says stand. Where is your brain located? Is there anything in particular that protects your brain? Oh, you don't know what it is called? I wonder where we could find that information?

Both Luke and Evan made follow-up suggestion decisions based on students' interests, wonderings, or connections during the key lesson. Evan and Luke offered options that were related to the key lesson and aligned with the interests of the students present for the

lesson. Luke would often alter the context of the key lesson experience in order to connect to the interests of the students. He felt that changing the context into a more familiar context helped the children connect to the work and encouraged them to continue on with the work after the lesson with him was complete.

Theme Three: School Ideology

The third theme that emerged concerning decisions made by Luke and Evan was the influence of River Montessori's ideology. River Montessori had been in operation for over 45 years. The founder of the school, Deb, was a published author in the area of social development. Luke and Evan often referred to the school's ideology as the reasoning behind decisions made in their classrooms. The influence of River Montessori's ideology on Luke and Evan's decision-making occurred in four (4) ways for the guides in this study, including: (1) approaching and practicing social and emotional development; (2) limiting the use of technology; (3) commenting on students' work; and (4) enriching the child's language development.

Approaching and Practicing Social and Emotional Development

Luke and Evan were committed to developing the whole child, a known pursuit of Montessori education. At River Montessori developing the whole child was not only a belief grounded in Montessori education it was a belief grounded in the founder's personal research and published book *Children Who Are Not Peaceful: Preventing Exclusion in the Early Elementary Classroom*. It was no surprise that Luke and Evan made decisions in their classroom practice directly aligned with the founder's approach and implementation of social and emotional development. Luke and Evan thanked Deb for her acknowledgement of and passion for modeling and practicing appropriate social interactions with others, especially when communicating and managing sensitive situations with "children who were not yet peaceful." Evan and Luke looked to Deb's practices and policies first when addressing decisions made about the child's social and emotional development.

Luke: The school itself has a very, very strong culture where we are balancing within the classroom environment academics and also social development. So, on any given day you could be more like 70% academics and 30% social development. The next day it could shift and you could have a day you worked a lot with social development, in terms of the children being able to speak with one another, their mediations, so, really the school and Deb's great respect and acknowledgement of the social development that is taking place at this age level.

Given Luke and Evan both directed the decisions they made in their classrooms about social development to the founder, Deb, I felt it was important to converse with Deb about her understanding of the child's social and emotional development. In 2001 Deb

published *Children Who Are Not Yet Peaceful: Preventing Exclusions in the Early Elementary Classroom*. In this book Deb told the history of Montessori and how becoming a Montessori guide influenced how she approached the unsettled child, known amongst Montessorians as the non-normalized child, and to most others as the misbehaving child. I sat down with Deb briefly on a holiday afternoon to talk about her Montessori beginnings. Deb became interested in Montessori when she stumbled upon a lecture one night on Montessori education near her place of work. She mentioned how this lecture left an imprint and ignited a fire within her to study Montessori's lectures and other works. Deb later experimented with the Montessori method on her own five children. This interest turned into a career when Deb decided to open a Montessori private school serving the public.

Deb explained her thinking behind the not yet peaceful child and the decisions she made when approaching these children in her own lower elementary Montessori classroom. One comment, in particular, about bullying left an imprint, "I worry about the child doing the bullying, not the child being bullied." Deb worried about the types of experiences the bullying child had been exposed to, whether real or visceral, causing this child to act out or bully another. She assured me at River Montessori of course they care about both parties. It was the school's responsibility to protect all children and provide a non-violent work environment where the child had the greatest potential to reach his or her full potential as a whole human being. Deb's concern for the bully connected with a statement Jerry made in one of our conversations about children and play. Each worried

about the raw material available to children and how this material affected their relationships with themselves and others.

Deb hoped her book would be a resource for Montessori guides, especially Luke and Evan, and the public on how to turn a challenging situation with children into a positive activity that eventually freed the child from the need to act out. On several occasions I watched Luke and Evan approach, address, and apply strategies from Deb's book in conflict situations in their classrooms. Luke explained decisions he made when assisting children with the Montessori science experiments. I observed two children working collaboratively, sharing the responsibilities of the evaporation science experiment, which included striking a match and using a burner, as well as other glass and metal science equipment. I prompted Luke later in a stimulated recall session about the decisions he made to support the social development of the children because it was evident from the way the two children interacted with one another during this lesson experiment that they had been coached. Luke validated this claim and shared his thinking behind what social development looks like in his classroom. I witnessed the two children in the evaporation experiment attempt to strike the match to light the burner over ten times. What was interesting was the partner did not judge the child's failed attempts. The audience that had gathered around the two as they performed the lesson also did not judge. This was what Luke had to say about the children's decision to show patience, without judgment. I asked Luke how he made decisions when he noticed children might need his help or support.

Luke: That is just language that I try to model in terms of I have some advice, can I offer it to you? Or this is something that I see happening and so I do that consciously just to model that type of language that the children can start to practice with one another and also so it's not forced upon them. They're more willing to accept it if I always just try to speak in a way where the tone isn't blaming or shaming or humiliating in any sort of way.

Luke made the conscious decision to model language he wanted his students to adopt and implement in their personal conversations and interactions. He carefully selected language that was supportive, without judgment. This approach directly aligned with the school's ideology of social development.

Evan also drew from his understanding of the school's ideology when making decisions about the children's social and emotional development. I was present for a full day observation on May 9th, 2012, just two weeks before the end of school. Evan watched the children make decisions he was not used to seeing on this day. He decided to have a group conversation about the observations he made from the morning work time before lunch.

Evan: This gives me an opportunity to talk to you about something I am observing...I saw lots of tears...students going outside without checking in with me...this gives us an opportunity to talk about boundaries, to talk about work ethic. I see four students who are not following my directions.

Evan expressed dissatisfaction with the organization of the room. Children had not properly cleaned up their works, so bits and pieces of materials from the work were still on the tables. He made the decision to bring this lack of care for the environment to all of the children's attention. He followed this observation of a messy environment with information about what he expected from the students. In this situation Evan needed to re-establish boundaries for freedom with responsibility because his students were

showing him through their actions and interactions that they needed support. The students had taken advantage of their freedom this morning. They were not respecting the social parameters in place. Evan recognized there were only two weeks of school until summer vacation, but he did not want this to serve as an excuse for poor social decisions in his classroom. Evan approached this discussion with a pep talk.

Evan: You need to hang in there. You need to be strong, retain purpose in your presence. Can you do this? Have your actions support your words. What constitutes work? Part of our work time is not just academic it is social. It is about boundaries. Asking for space. Earlier today two children were at the piano. They asked for space. The child did not give it. If I ask for space, does that mean that I have to have space from everybody? You need to control yourselves. What do I always say to you? You are the captain of your own ship. There are times you have to navigate around things, strive to be graceful, caring, loving...

Evan made the decision to reestablish social boundaries in his classroom. He observed children acting out of character all morning and decided to wait until before lunch to address the group as a whole. His approach was aligned with the school's ideology or stating what you see without judgment and then refocusing the students by stating his responsibility to them.

Evan: My responsibility to you is to make sure that we are engaged in purposeful work. To nourish your mind...there are a lot of things this morning that I enjoyed and appreciated and a lot of things that I didn't. It is my job to speak up.

The evidence was clear Evan and Luke's decisions about the child's social and emotional development were the result of a school-developed culture driven by Deb's personal experience, her knowledge, and book. Evan even mentioned a course given by Deb on how to talk so kids will listen, how to listen so kids will talk. He mentioned this course took place within a home space where all participants felt comfortable to share specific

classroom needs. Evan asked for suggestions on how to handle sibling rivalry, since he had siblings in his classroom in need of greater harmony.

Evan: So, we have opportunities to practice, to read, and to discuss situations. How we would handle it and it is something, I know personally, I have taken some of those courses more than once. There are variations for example for siblings with rivalry. I've had several siblings in the classroom. I have had several siblings in the classroom where some of these dynamics enter the classroom. So, we just try to set up an atmosphere and once you have it going, once you have a lot of this already in place, the other children start hearing it and picking up on it and using it.

Luke and Evan worked hard to model appropriate means of communicating with others. They also provided many opportunities for the children to work collaboratively allowing them to practice what they observed Luke and Evan do. Both Luke and Evan made decisions not to judge the children and their actions and interactions with one another. This was a school policy. Instead they would say what they observed and offer helpful suggestions. At times these suggestions were in the form of reestablishing social boundaries.

Limiting the Use of Technology

Luke and Evan supported the school's ideology to limit the lower elementary child's exposure to technology, including the Internet, television, videogames, and other social media in and outside of the classroom. On one occasion I saw a laptop computer in the classroom. Evan wanted to show his students an email he had received about a bug that was found in the classroom on several occasions in the last week. He opened his email

account and showed the students the picture. He wondered about the bug and asked students questions about it, which served as an invitation for some students to research this bug further on their own time.

Luke and Evan believed the environment the child was exposed to operated as raw material for the child. They realized that some students were exposed to high-quality raw material and others low-quality raw material. According to Luke and Evan the raw material a child was given in his environment impacted the child's perspective of the world and him or herself. The guides wanted to control the environment by carefully selecting what raw material the children engaged with. They did not believe television shows, videogames, and the Internet were safe enough raw materials for the child.

Since Jerry served as the elementary coordinator in support of Luke and Evan's practices his approach to social development is included in the school's ideology. In an interview with Jerry he used the phrase raw material in the context of sources of technology. He voiced his concern, which aligned with Luke and Evan's concern about over exposure to media.

Jerry: One of the big controversies in child development circles and child psychology circles in general is what is the natural content of children's play? Our thinking about this is when you see children acting out violence and cruelty a lot of that is coming from what raw material they have been given by their environment, so this is one of the reasons we talk to our parents a lot about television, books, and what not.

Evan mentioned a situation in his classroom where one child was acting out violent scenes on paper. This child shared some of his work with me narrating the actions in his drawing. Evan expressed minimal frustration with this situation because (in his words)

he had a “team of professional support” behind him. He arranged for the child psychologist on staff to observe the child and he discussed with me language to use with the child supportive of Deb’s approach to social and emotional development. Evan never stated that the actions displayed by the child were the fault of the child or the family. Instead, like Jerry, he suspected he had seen such scenes in videogames or other television mediums. Evan steadfastly kept his focus on spontaneous activities and language he enacted with the child to help the child transition from this place of violence to a place of peace.

Luke and Evan supported the school’s ideology to limit the lower elementary child’s use of technology. This decision was related to the extant literature about the correlation between hours of television watched or videogames played and acts of violence in children. In the Community Handbook there were articles for the parents and families to read supporting the school’s ideology to limit the lower elementary child’s exposure to technology and media.

Commenting on Students’ Work

Luke and Evan relied upon school ideology when making decision about how to comment on students work. I noticed a similarity in the way Luke and Evan commented on students’ work. They never expressed a judgment about the work, like it was good or needed work. Instead they focused on aspects of the work that they could see followed

by feeling words without judgment. At times they asked questions related to unfulfilled feelings. I asked Evan and Luke to share with me how they made decisions when commenting on students' work.

Evan: When it comes to the work that children bring to me, especially if it's art or a poem they'll bring it to you sometimes and say "This is what I have done, this is what I have created" and sometimes what I feel like happens is that the adult will just praise it. "It's beautiful or that's lovely." But it's something that I think we are trying to get away from just praising the work saying this is just so beautiful, but get to the point where we are actually describing what we're seeing so that way they see that we really are noticing their work.

On one occasion a female student approached Evan asking if he liked her poster with a bird cutout and the words *Free Peace and Love* written in large print in the middle of the sign. Evan took his time with his response. At first he stood with a subtle smile admiring with bright eyes the work before him. He then extended his hand making eye contact with the student. The student leaned in giving her hand to him in return. Evan stated, "Can I tell you what I enjoy about this? That you cut it out and...wrote these four words. What a powerful message! I agree."

Luke mentioned the role River Montessori's ideology had on how he commented on students' work. Instead of giving the child a judgment about the quality of the work or its likeability, the school encouraged him to acknowledge the steps the child made in the creation of the work. He did not remember this type of communication with students as part of his training. Responding to students' work by telling them what they saw was a part of the school's ideology.

Luke: The way I was told (by the school, by the school counselor, by Deb, and by other Children's House guides) or asked to express or have interactions with children at that age because they will come up to you with different work and you

want to get them to a point where they're not always coming to you to give acknowledgment or to feel good about their work.

Evan also discussed this same process of noticing what they saw and not focusing on judging the quality of the work. This process of commenting on student's work took place all day long. No time was off limits for the child. Children approached the guide freely, unless the guide was engaged in a key lesson. This was a time to be respected. In Luke's classroom if students approached him while he was giving a key lesson he would not make eye contact with the approaching child. The child knew that this lack of eye contact meant he was unavailable.

Many students approached the guide with work in hand. This was a typical routine process. Luke and Evan would notice, observe, question, prompt, and sometimes wonder about the work in progress. There was never this full acknowledgment of a work being completed. The emphasis was on the process. I observed Evan using what Luke referred to as River Montessori language when providing a child feedback on his work.

Evan: So instead of saying, "Oh this is beautiful, say I notice you have these blue clouds or sorry this blue sky with little parts where it's a little bit darker. Is it sunrise or sunset?" So, opening it up for them to continue to share about their artwork. So, I ask a question and then they'll go for a while. It allows them to really feel that I really am observing their work and that I am giving some specific things that I truly enjoy about what I am seeing. I try to describe and not praise.

Clearly River Montessori's ideology impacted how Luke and Evan made decisions when commenting on students' work. Luke and Evan were taught by the school to respond by telling details about the child's work process. They were to use this strategy instead of making judgments about the quality of the child's work.

Enriching the Child's Language Development

Luke and Evan supported the school's ideology to take advantage of using more advanced and scientific language with students when giving key lessons as well as generally speaking when communicating with children or interacting with the environment. River Montessori believed it was Luke and Evan's job as lower elementary guides to use academic language with children. They believed academic language enriched the experience for the child and gave the child the opportunity to share in a more complete understanding of the world. Both Luke and Evan were experienced observers of children and knowledgeable of the three-year lower elementary curriculum content. Luke and Evan were ready to apply the language of the key lessons in every situation, not just the key lesson itself.

Evan: Well I know that we, as a school, always try to enrich their language. And so whenever we have an opportunity and we catch ourselves wanting to use a language that isn't going to help them (the children), we have to find a way to say this in a different way. It may feel a little robotic at first, but then you start to really honor the child by speaking to them in a way that you know this is going to add to their lexicon of words. So, an example of when I have seen that from the children is when we were working on fluid and viscous liquids and we talked about how heat effects viscosity and so we, first, we had to do some experiments. We looked at different types of liquids and we talked about something being viscous, something being fluid. Well, I had a parent conference and before the conference began she was like I have to tell you that we were making dinner last night and we had some gravy and my son said, "That's really viscous!"

Evan went on to explain how the child was not trying to be cute or coy with his comment.

As a guide he deliberately chose not to say thick, but instead to use viscous. Evan felt it

was a great opportunity for the child to start building his or her own language base. So, when Evan made decisions about his language choice this was his metacognition.

Evan: Giving yourself that second, that gift of time before I use this language. Is this elevating their language? Is this elevating their work? Is this taking this to, I think I have heard some people around campus saying, "Taking this to the next level?"

Luke never held back from using more complicated language when communicating with his students. When Luke established his rule that no child should interrupt him when he was giving a key lesson he used the word periphery to explain to the child that he could see the child even if he did not make direct eye contact with him or her. When establishing the classroom rule that all children should whisper to one another this was the language Luke used to convey this expectation.

Luke: Also, in terms of vocal volume in the room we have talked about how within their households they may just have three, or four, or five people that constitute their community, so they may be accustomed to speaking across greater distances to one another, but here in our space we're a community of 32 children and 2 adults and if we were all having conversations across a greater space it would be very chaotic.

I also observed Luke using scientific language during a great lesson. This great lesson was about the humans and their beginning on Earth. He had a chart and several students gathered around him for this story. He explained an image on the chart of a stone and how a human had attached the stone to a stick creating a weapon.

Luke: Here it is not just a stone anymore. They have attached a stone to a piece of wood. Here I see...here I see evidence of other tools. Bone maybe, which is used to dig into the ground. Bones are the bits of evidence that archeologists look for. I wonder if sometimes humans get ideas for hunting from watching animals?

It was customary in Luke and Evan's classroom to hear advanced language. Luke and Evan were committed to taking full advantage of modeling the language of the key lessons and the adult world. This practice was grounded in the school's ideology that the child would only use scientific and academic language if it was used and modeled for them.

Chapter VI: How was Care and Cultural Responsiveness Understood and Approached in the Decision-Making of Guides?

In this chapter I discuss how both care and cultural responsiveness was understood and approached in the decision-making of the guides in this study. In part one of this chapter I begin by discussing the conceptions of care and cultural responsiveness that Evan and Luke held. The four (4) key themes that emerged from the data with regards to how the guides understood care and cultural responsiveness were: (1) sustaining relationships and creating a cohesive community; (2) respecting students' ideas inside the classroom; (3) responsibility for materials, people, and animals both in and outside of the classroom; and (4) showing concern about social awareness and difference. In part two of the chapter, I follow with a discussion of how both guides made pedagogic decisions in relation to care and cultural responsiveness in the classroom. Four (4) key themes characterized the guides' pedagogic decision-making with regards to care and cultural responsiveness: (1) using key lessons and follow-up; (2) facilitating collaborative learning; (3) enacting the great lessons; and (4) implementing specific approaches to classroom discipline.

According to Noddings (1992; 2005) schools need to make continuity and care a priority. Teachers remaining with the same children for two or more years in the same school building developed more cohesive classroom communities and greater opportunities for academic achievement. I argue Noddings' notion of continuity, or continuous consecutive years with the same teacher in the same school building, is directly connected to Gay's (2000; 2002) notion of connectedness, community, and

collaboration, main tenets of culturally responsive teaching (CRT). When discussing care and cultural responsiveness I assert actions of care and actions responsive to culture are interconnected and related.

Care is a component of CRT and in today's diverse classroom (be it gender, age, race, economic status, or religion) CRT is arguably a component of care.

Teachers who really care about students honor their humanity, hold them in high esteem, expect high performance from them, and use strategies to fulfill their expectations. (Gay, 2000, p. 46)

One way Noddings (1992) honored the child's humanity was through:

...Reflective examination of one's own life—life as an individual, as a member of a particular race, as a member of an economic class, as a member of any particular group (p. 136).

Both Luke and Evan taught in classrooms where the child remained under their guidance for a minimum of three years. They spoke extensively about deliberate decision-making directed at creating sustaining relationships and the development of a harmonious classroom community, two characteristics aligned with care and culturally responsive teaching.

Part One: Guides' Understandings of Care and Cultural Responsiveness

Theme One: Sustaining Relationships and Community

The first theme that emerged concerning the conceptions of care and cultural responsiveness that operated in the guides' classrooms was sustaining relationships and

creating a cohesive community. Both Luke and Evan recognized the value and importance of sustaining relationships and creating a cohesive community in their classrooms, two key characteristics of both care and cultural responsiveness. Respect for sustaining relationships and community operated in three (3) ways for the guides in this study, including: (1) continuity between student and guide over time; (2) continuity between the student and the school over time; and (3) perspectives about the importance of the collaborative work environment for students.

Continuity Between Students and Guides

Students and guides were generally paired together for a three-year academic cycle. While this was part of the larger Montessori philosophy and school practice, Luke and Evan used this opportunity to create a strong classroom community. For example, a child at River Montessori ideally had the same guide for up to three years before graduating to the next level. Luke and Evan chose to embrace this three-year cycle starting with investing in the creation and maintenance of positive relationships with all of the children in their classrooms. They spent a great deal of time and energy getting to know the students in their care as well as their families. Evan mentioned to me that he met with new families at the beginning of the year in order to learn more about the child through the eyes of the ones' who cared for him first. Luke spoke extensively about the need to model and uphold high-quality grace and courtesy with one another in order to develop positive peer bonds and a sense of human connection amongst community

members. The three-year lower elementary cycle gave Luke and Evan the time to model, practice, and establish a true community of learners whom acted and interacted with one other with care.

Continuity Between Guides and the School

Students and guides reside on the same school campus for the child's entire educational experience. Once a child was enrolled it was the school's goal to keep that child at the school until the age of 15. Most students enrolled at the age of 3, which meant they would be on the same campus for up to 12 years. Being on the same campus for 12 years allowed the child the opportunity to learn the governing rules and expectations at the school. Gay and Noddings agreed that making schools "homes away from home" benefited the development of the whole child including the child's academic, social, and emotional intelligence.

Due to unforeseen circumstances a child would leave the classroom once and awhile. Sometimes because a parent was relocated for work, other times because the cost of tuition became too demanding. When possible River Montessori would provide tuition assist for needy families. Luke and Evan supported the school's goal to keep the educational experience of the child continuous, so once the child enrolled at River Montessori Luke and Evan encouraged the families to keep their child at the school through the 8th grade.

As stated above, allowing students the opportunity to invest in a school increases the child's desire to connect to the school creating a sense of community and ownership for the space. Luke and Evan were integral in facilitating the sense of community on River Montessori's campus. They promoted interaction between the different grade level classrooms by allowing their lower elementary students to present lessons to the younger grade levels. They also encouraged their students to use the older students at the school as a resource when they were studying different aspects of the lower elementary curriculum. They made the conscious decision to let the child move about the campus with purpose in order to establish a secure bond between the child and his or her school space.

Collaborative Work Environment

Luke and Evan made decisions in their classrooms to model and practice communication and interaction aligned with characteristics of care and culturally responsive teaching. Each made deliberate decisions regarding word choice especially when facilitating students' peer communication and work. Nel Noddings (1992) and Geneva Gay (2000) were advocates of using cooperative learning strategies in the classroom to promote inter ethnic group social interactions and friendships, as well as improved levels of self-confidence and care for others.

Collaborative work in Luke and Evan's classrooms was spontaneous. The decision to allow spontaneous collaborative work to be child initiated was a result of their AMI training practices grounded in Dr. Montessori's child study research. As children arrived in the morning, after they prepared the environment for the day, they would select which work to engage with and with whom they would work. This selection process did not happen without coaching. When the Montessori child first arrived at River Montessori's campus Luke and Evan did not assume the child knew how to select work and how to invite others to work with him or her. Luke and Evan explicitly taught the children the value of work and how to engage in healthful work practices.

Luke and Evan's job was to observe each child and capitalize on an opportune moment to invite the child to work with a material concept appropriate for his or her developmental readiness. That being said, both guides mentioned they were open to giving specific children recommendations for people to work with. They felt it was necessary for the child to experience working as a productive collaborative team and anytime they could promote the creation of a team they would. Evan explained this choice in detail below.

Evan: I am also a person that can give references. You know who was working on comparison of adjectives just yesterday? That was H. What do you say you go ask him if he is available to kind of help you set that up and I will be right there? So, here's a person I have now connected them to and they go and they work with that person to help set it up and then I'll go and I'll find that there is something, they've gone beyond the set up and they actually are beginning to work with it and interact with the materials because once that other child is reconnected with it and it is now an opportunity for showing it's hard for them to say okay, well I am done here.

According to both respected theorists and practitioners it was not enough to just know the curriculum content, teachers must also know “the various dimensions of human needs” of students (Gay, 2000, p. 207). Evan’s think aloud above showed his commitment to not only the content the child was working on, but also his commitment to promoting the human need to connect to others with similar work experience. Children were human and as human beings were driven by the need for “human connectedness.” High-quality educators know this human tendency and allow all students the time for “collaborative problem solving.” Human connectedness was a central feature in both Luke and Evan’s classrooms. Their goal as guides was to promote peer connectedness and foster healthful peer relationships.

Luke and Evan provided mutual aid, interdependence, and opportunities for reciprocity, all characteristics of culturally responsive teaching. Evan and Luke encouraged children to rely upon the skills, talents, and knowledge of others. Children in each lower elementary Montessori classroom often taught preliminary lessons with the didactic materials to their classmates. Such practices showed Luke and Evan’s confidence in the belief that children discovered and learned without the guide present. Where River Montessori practices differed from Gay’s perspective on collaborative work was who made the work groups. According to Gay, the selection of group members was determined by the teacher and students rather than freely chosen by students alone.

Luke and Evan modeled and facilitated the creation of collaborate work environments in their classroom. They desired to strengthen bonds between students allowing the child the opportunity to practice being the carer and cared for in a reciprocal

relationship. Luke and Evan wanted students to aid each other in their academic development, thus they made the conscious decision to let children teach each other preliminary lessons with the didactic materials. Their collaborative work decisions directly aligned with characteristics of care and culturally responsive teaching.

Theme Two: Respect for Students' Ideas Inside the Classroom

The second theme that emerged concerning the conceptions of care and cultural responsiveness that operated in the guides' classrooms was having respect for ideas inside the classroom. Both Luke and Evan recognized the value and importance of holding respect for students' ideas, and in this case, ideas that might be viewed as inappropriate or controversial to discuss in an elementary classroom community. According to Gay (2000) "Curriculum content must be accessible to students and connected to their lives and experiences outside of school" (p.111). Like Gay, Noddings (1992) asserted classrooms were places where students were encouraged to act, wonder, and pursue issues of interest. Both theorists felt strongly that the curriculum was alive and debatable, based on the needs and interests of students. Respect for students' ideas occurred in two (2) ways for the guides in this study, including: (1) welcoming discussions of religion in the classroom; and (2) giving students the opportunity to discuss issues related to life and death.

Noddings (1992) believed so much of history and culture was connected to religion “that it is hard to imagine people acquiring anything like a cultural or tribal understanding without some knowledge of it” (p. 83). She was in support of learning about the human longing for God or spirit. The Montessori philosophy was supportive of peace education including dialogue, research, and religious practices in school. Since Luke and Evan’s classroom curriculum was not beholden to a singular textbook or resource they had the autonomy to research and collaborate with colleagues in order to find a source that fulfilled the children’s curiosity or need. Gay (2000) was in support of selecting resources with accurate information about ethnic groups with wide-ranging and appropriately contextualized content about different cultural groups’ histories, cultures, and experiences. Luke and Evan were empowered to select the resources from which they taught religion as well as follow the child’s lead even when the children were curious about topics typically omitted from the standard curriculum.

Religion Welcomed

One student-generated area of interest that emerged in both Luke and Evan’s classroom was curiosity about religion and religious beliefs and practices. I witnessed a conversation on the existence of God initiated by a curious student in Evan’s classroom. Evan embraced this child’s question and encouraged deep dialogue on the topic of

religion. Several students joined the exploration of the existence of God. They formed a tight circle at the front of the classroom on the floor.

Evan: [Is God real?] That is a great question, something that kings have been asking for a long time. Children do you have a solution for that? So does religion...does it exist for everyone? Can we accept that for some religions it has an active role in our daily lives' and for some it doesn't? Can we accept that? What are the names of religions in general? Christianity, Judaism, Christianity has its roots in Judaism. What are some other religions? Can't think of any? I think you should look up religions in the dictionary...some religions do they have more than one God? Are there, in some religions, Goddesses or are they always masculine or male? Are there any religions that are no longer practiced? So, do some religions go extinct? So, you are saying this is a human influence...did humans create our creator? Do you believe in it? You don't believe in it...I am a little concerned that you say everyone should...

Evan ended this exploration of God, religions, and human's belief practices by asking how everyone felt about what was said. The seven students present for the discourse agreed they felt satisfied with the information shared and the questions posed. Some left the group ready to investigate different aspects of religion and human's spiritual history.

Luke made it clear religion was also welcomed in his classroom. He began conversations on religion by inviting the religious rituals and beliefs from the children's home into the classroom. For example, everyday before lunch two children said grace and lit a candle. There was also a shelf in the classroom devoted to the exploration of various religious beliefs. The children were encouraged to discover the religious practices of various denominations. Luke specifically mentioned lessons involving the Jewish, Christian, and Buddhist faiths. "We will talk about all those different ideas and beliefs that are out there, so that is very predominant." Like key lessons, religion was explored in story format making the experience tangible and personable for the child.

Luke also shared with me his perspective on teaching about culture and difference. In his lower elementary classroom he made the decision to talk about different myths, cultures, and people. His approach to teaching myths was to place the child at the center of the narrative. For example, if he read an African myth he would introduce this myth to the children by saying, “These would be some things we believed or some stories that we would have heard.” If he was sharing a Greek myth he would say, “Had we been born in Greece a thousand years ago this would have been one of the stories that would have been told to you as a child.” He shared a text called *Ricotto and the Durango Bird*, which explored the slave trade and Madagascar. Another resource he chose to share with his students about difference was *Born Different*, which according to Luke was a collection of stories about people born with physical deformities or unique qualities. Luke also made the decision to talk about difference in the context of geography lessons. He felt it made sense to discuss how people from different environments have different needs, which affected their clothing and their way of life including the foods available to them and the house that sheltered them.

Luke and Evan felt comfortable following the child’s lead. They embraced questions of religion and diversity and used a variety of resources to support their understanding and knowledge, but remembered to leave opportunities for the child to research and discover on their own time. Noddings (1992) referred to this strategy as providing “parameters” within which students worked. Luke and Evan felt strongly about giving the children accurate information, while remaining neutral on the subject. Evan never told the students whether he believed in God or which God he believed in.

He simply provided the parameters for the discussion about the existence of God. Luke never stated whether the African or Greek myths were good or bad or right or wrong, he simply told students that they existed and they were one way to learn more about peoples who were different from them.

Culturally responsive pedagogy embraces the use of several resources to teach about diversity (Gay, 2000). However, this approach might view the lack of attention given to issues of social justice in Luke and Evan's classrooms as passive pedagogy. Creating parameters differed from Gay's (2000; 2002) approach to critical dialogue and social justice. Luke and Evan did not analyze the resources they shared nor did they create opportunities for the students to examine and deliberate on issues of race, economic status, or oppression, a main tenet of culturally responsive teaching. Both Luke and Evan did not reach this level of critical analysis instead they created parameters and let the child pursue an area of interest aligned with his or her own inclinations.

Life and Death

Luke and Evan were supported by River Montessori to explicitly teach sex education in the elementary classroom. They were given the approved resources to teach from and each selected the best time to invite children to listen to the story of plant, animal, and human reproduction. Noddings (1992) was in favor of appreciatively studying the ordinary tasks of life including nutrition, spirituality, and life and death. Although Gay

(2000) did not specify the need to teach about life and death she was certainly supportive of choosing and delivering content with a meaningful presence in the life of the child.

I had the opportunity to observe Luke share “How Babies are Made” with a large group of students (more than half of the class). Before reading the book, Luke chose to preface what students would be seeing and hearing. He felt the pictures were realistic and he did not want the students to feel embarrassed to look at them and ask questions. Luke stopped often, which allowed students to react and respond, sometimes to his questions and sometimes to their feelings and curiosities. The book compared animal birth to plant life birth, showcasing how all-living organisms are born and die.

Luke: When your life began you were very, very small...smaller than that dot is how all of us began...here you can see the ovary with eggs inside. They are kept where the calyx joins the stem...you can see the way they made those pollen particles bright yellow...when an egg gets fertilized it can grow into a seed...the eggs come from the mother and the pollen comes from the father. Mother animals have eggs that are very tiny...sperm from father animals are even smaller...here is a picture of a sperm seen with a microscope...to send his sperm into the hens body the rooster climbs on the hens back...when sperm enters the egg, the egg changes. This process is also called fertilization.

What took place between Luke and his elementary students was an honest conversation about how life began for both plants and animals. This dialogue was truthful and scientific. Luke and Evan were supported by River Montessori and Montessori methodology to use scientific language to describe the process of fertilization. They were not asked to sugarcoat the language. Luke used the terms egg, sperm, and vagina to tell the story of how human babies were born. After the story was finished Luke invited the children to stay and be a part of a conversation about having twins. No children chose to

stay. He also told the group that they would have the opportunity to bring the “How Babies are Made” book home to read with their families.

When I asked Luke and Evan if any parents ever reacted in a negative way to these stories of reproduction being a part of the curriculum they both responded they had never received any negative feedback because parents knew ahead of time it was coming. River Montessori made the choice to include sex education and before parents enrolled their child in the program they agreed to this decision. It was the school’s choice to include this curricular material. Luke and Evan were given the school-selected resources and each shared the same stories with their own interpretation and supportive prompts and questioning based on students’ reactions and feedback.

Theme Three: Responsibility for Materials and People Inside and Outside of the Classroom

The third theme that emerged concerning the conceptions of care and cultural responsiveness that operated in the guides’ classrooms was holding students responsible for both physical materials and for people, animals, and plant life inside and outside of the classroom. Luke and Evan recognized the necessity for students to have a reverence for life including a responsibility for the physical environment of their shared classroom community, as well as for the people, animals, and plant life both in and outside of the classroom. Noddings (1992) explicitly stated the need for children to sympathize and

empathize with other people, as well as the need for a moral attitude toward animals, plant life, objects, and instruments. Gay (2000) asserted teachers should “model academic, social, personal, and moral behaviors and values” (p. 46). Modeling and practicing a reverence for life was evident in both Luke and Evan’s classroom community.

Respect for Materials Inside the Classroom

Luke and Evan made decisions in their classrooms to model and practice respect for all materials, instruments, objects, animals, and plant life in the classroom. This respect for all animate and inanimate life in the classroom was paramount to the Montessori belief that the child required a prepared environment within which to grow, discover, interact, and live. It was also aligned with characteristics of care and culturally responsive teaching aimed at creating students with a moral center. I made the observation that most of the materials in Luke and Evan’s classrooms were made from natural resources. Both informed me this was a conscious choice informed by Montessori’s deep connection with giving the child ample opportunity to interact with elements from nature. Dr. Montessori desired to instill in children a love and appreciation for the universe and the preservation of natural resources. Luke and Evan interpreted Montessori’s love and appreciation as a reverence for life, including the life of objects in their classrooms. Explicit care was

given to modeling respect for the didactic materials, furniture, charts, and kitchen supplies in each classroom.

In both Luke and Evan's classroom there were clear and explicit guidelines on how to use the didactic materials and how to care for them. The students were taught that every material on the shelf was specifically placed and organized.

Luke: There is always a set up, a carrying out of the action, and a clean up involved in all of the materials. So that also lends very strongly to the sequencing, the order, and also the respect for the materials.

Children were taught how to carry the materials from the shelves to their tables. When working with a material at the table students used an underlay to protect the wooden table from the movement of the materials. If students chose to do their work on the floor they would lay down a rug of an appropriate size to protect the material from the soil and dust on the floor.

If students were not finished with their works before lunch they would organize their materials, turn their chairs to the side, or indicate the work belonged to them with a name card. When students were finished with their materials they were expected to return their works to the shelf space they came from leaving it in the same condition they found it in. Luke and Evan both spoke of safety procedures in place all students were accustomed to when working with specific apparatuses and materials. For example, in the wintertime when students used the division racks and tubes they were to roll up their sleeves so they didn't get their clothing hooked onto the beads and cause "unnecessary frustration." Evan mentioned how students pulled their hair back when using a flame to

melt wax to close an envelope. Every detail in the Montessori classroom was approached with consciousness and precision. For example:

Evan: You don't put the book open-faced down, because that hurts the binding, so introducing the idea that we can use a bookmark to help save our page.

In addition, everyday both lower elementary classrooms spent time dusting the materials and shelves, and preparing the environment. In Luke's classroom this took place at the beginning of the day. When students arrived they would be invited to help prepare the classroom. Some students would prepare the practical life supplies like the dishes and napkins for lunch or the glass water picture and mugs for water. Other students would sweep the floors inside and outside of the classroom, while others would fold laundry. At the end of the day in both classrooms, children would dust the materials and wipe down the shelving. They would then replace the materials to the shelves in the proper order.

Care for the environment was an expectation and it was upheld on a daily basis. It was obvious from the way the children performed their cleaning there were clear directions on how to properly care for the environment. Children never complained about the jobs they chose to do. They happily engaged in caring for the environment with a sense of respect and dignity.

Respect for Materials Outside the Classroom

Luke and Evan made decisions to model appropriate attitudes and care for animals, plants, and other materials outside of the classroom. They each felt deeply that nature and humans coexisted and acted on one another's behalf. Their model and choice language about all life was characteristic of care and culturally responsive teaching. Each had a moral center with the goal to teach their children to appreciate all things in life. Luke and Evan modeled how to care for the natural environment. They felt care for the environment was a necessity and took pride in upholding this expectation in every interaction they had with plants and animals on the school grounds. Evan stated that River Montessori fostered in the children a "reverence for life" including: plants, animals, peoples from other lands and other time periods. Evan shared his perspective on how to handle the death of an animal in nature in a stimulated recall conversation.

Evan: So, when we look at things like a dead bird we don't just grab it with a plastic bag and throw it in the trash. We get a trowel, we dig a hole, collect some flowers, get some sticks, we recite a few words about this life, the beautiful songs that may have been coming from this bird, its beautiful feathers, that we hope that it finds rest and many times this is improvised. This is spoken from the heart. Other times children had poems written that they would read to the dead bird.

Evan believed that students had a predisposition to treat plants and animals with respect. So when children saw bugs in the classroom they would cover them with a dish and slide an underlay below the dish in order to take the bugs back to their natural environment. Evan even explained a situation where a bird flew into the classroom because they kept

the doors ajar in the spring and fall when the air was mild and inviting. When the bird flew in the children knew to turn off the lights and still and quiet their bodies until the bird found its way out.

Like Evan, Luke modeled and created opportunities for his students to practice care for plants and animals. For example, during recess one afternoon Luke noticed there were four rubber mats along the walkway that were overgrown with grass. He made a public noticing about this situation and purposed they should transplant the grass from within the mats to the ground below the mats. Several children volunteered their outdoor recess time for transplanting the grass and removing the mats. The children noticed the root structures of the grass as they pulled and placed. They were surprised that the roots were so strong requiring them to use a great deal of force to pull the grass from the mats.

In addition, one afternoon I arrived to Luke's classroom in the morning to see an aquarium with a caterpillar in it. I asked Luke about this new class animal and where it came from. He told me that one of the students brought it in from his yard at his home. Luke mentioned they would watch this caterpillar as it performed metamorphosis changing into a butterfly. Luke even placed several guidebooks about Texas caterpillars and butterflies below the aquarium on a shelf. The children excitedly explored the origins of this caterpillar and rifled through the guidebooks predicting the colors on its wings after its change. This is what Luke had to say about how he modeled and practiced the care of nature for his lower elementary children.

Luke: When interacting in nature we talk about being observers, so we bring our hands behind our back. There are lots of insects that occur in our room. If they are in our path, then we carefully return them to nature. If they are just on a

window or a wall then we allow them to be able to carry out their life. Sometimes we borrow them when we write about them and observe, but we always end up returning them.

Luke concluded this train of thought by discussing how he made decisions in his classroom to talk about body language and how to approach animals in a way that showed the animal that you (the child) were trustworthy, not a threat.

In both classrooms students moved freely from the indoor work environment to the outdoor work environment. In Luke's classroom they would sign a sign-out sheet as well as tell Luke. In Evan's classroom they would simply tell Evan they were working outside. On several occasions Evan chose to teach a lesson outside, especially on particularly pleasant days. He wanted to encourage his students to work outside more because he felt they did not take advantage of the outdoor space nearly enough.

Both lower elementary Montessori classrooms showed a reverence for life by promoting the concept of moderation. Each classroom scrapped their food scraps into a plastic bucket, which were then taken to the outdoor compost on campus. There was explicit dialogue in each classroom about what leftovers should go into the compost and which should be recycled or thrown away. Evan provided a think aloud reflection for how he chose to question students when they were being wasteful.

Evan: So, sometimes children will take a bite out of an apple and they will want to put it in the compost. Well that's a great opportunity to talk about economic geography. Talk about the resources, all the energy from the sun, all of the water, the care that this farmer must have put towards care of this produce or the crop. The energy of the person picking it, the energy of the person transporting it, the energy of the person unloading it from the truck, putting it out into the store. The energy of your parents working to earn, to go buy it, and then the energy to get it into your home and the other energy to make it to school all ends up in one bite. What do you think we can do if we just want a bite? And sometimes they'll say

just bring a half an apple...or you can cut your apple and just bring in the amount that you need.

Luke and Evan modeled a reverence for life in their actions and interactions with objects, plants, and animals both in and outside of the classroom. The children in Luke and Evan's classrooms were held accountable to act respectfully when handling objects, plants, and animals. They were taught to appreciate and value all manmade and nature created life.

Service in Response to the Local Community

Luke and Evan showed interest in creating opportunities for their children to practice care for the greater community through service projects. Luke reflected that his children currently had limited opportunities to serve the greater community. Evan's children were given different opportunities to serve the community because Evan was an active service-oriented person whom gave of his time often including volunteering to ride blind individuals around town on tandem bikes. Gay (2000) asserted, "The societal curriculum comes to school with students and teachers must contend with it" (p 130). Noddings (1992) believed children needed to learn how to sympathize and empathize with others in order to explore their own inclinations toward cruelty and violence. The children in Evan and Luke's classroom were exposed to societal ills present around the school community.

Evan spoke explicitly about a project he coordinated with an organization in town that provided homeless individuals with supplies. His classroom made homemade

scarves from yarn with needlepoint. They chose to make pockets in these scarves in order to place items like water bottles, bus passes, and toiletries inside of the scarves. Evan knew it was challenging for his children to let go of these scarves, since they chose the colors for the yarn and spent the time making the scarves, so he had the children gather together with their scarves on to take a photograph. He wanted them to have a visual memory of the scarves they worked hard to create before they gave it to him to deliver directly to homeless people in the local community. Evan mentioned the pride some of the recipients of the scarves had and how they were hesitant to accept this gift at first. As he told me this story you could feel the care he had for the recipient. His eyes welled with tears and his voice choked. His reflection of this service project was emotional.

Luke shared child-initiated projects the children facilitated on campus. He spoke of the collection of seeds on the campus to give to parents in order to begin a garden space at home. At this point, Luke's class had not engaged in a service project with the local community. He felt this was a next step for his classroom. He was currently exploring ways to connect with the community at large.

Luke and Evan wished to create opportunities for their children to engage in service projects in order to place them in the role of carer in a larger social context. They knew the children witnessed different societal ills and they wanted to promote a sense of service in the child, as opposed to anger or cruelty toward those in need.

Theme Four: Concern About Social Awareness and Difference

The fourth theme that emerged concerning the conceptions of care and cultural responsiveness that operated in the guides' classrooms was showing concern about social awareness and difference. Here I noted how Luke and Evan's social awareness, or the need for students to freely choose who to socialize and work with, was a skill they had to model and facilitate on a daily basis. An aspect of social awareness in Luke and Evan's classroom was the decision to present career choices without a gender stereotype. Another aspect of social awareness was allowing students the freedom to fully engage in something of their choosing. Pursuing individual interests and deliberate language supportive of eradicating gender bias are characteristics of care and culturally responsive teaching. Showing concern about social awareness and difference occurred in three (3) ways for the guides in this study, including: (1) not allowing students to claim individual, personal ownership of classroom shared space; (2) encouraging gender-neutral discussions in the classroom; and (3) celebrating difference in the form of a peace march.

No Assigned Seats

The students in Luke and Evan's classrooms began the day by placing their belongings in a cubby and freely choosing practical life activities to prepare the classroom for the day followed by work they performed alone or with others of their choosing. The decision to not give children assigned seats was informed by Dr. Montessori's methodology. She

felt confining students to designated spaces in the classroom limited students opportunities to socialize and learn how to move with purpose, control, and care. Luke and Evan were responsible for interpreting and managing classrooms enacting freedom with responsibility where children were encouraged to work with all others.

Luke and Evan wanted the children to choose where they would sit and work throughout the day. The tables in the classroom were light enough for children to rearrange and reposition allowing children the opportunity to work in large groups as well as small groups. From the way the children worked together to lift and reposition tables for specific works you knew Luke and Evan modeled this expectation.

Evan shared his perspective on the decision to give young children the ability to have freedom with responsibility. He noticed that no assigned seats empowered the children to work with a variety of different people at various applications of the three-year curriculum. This meant that first years, or first graders, would often choose to work with other first years, second years, or even third years and vice versa. The children did not limit the children they worked with to their current grade level.

Evan: It's really interesting because I think some of that comes from the language that surrounds the children. We don't use first grade, second grade, third grade, so there is not that delineation. I am a third grader and I am doing third grade work. So, when I work with them I don't just have third graders or just first graders. We call them beginning cycles and these children are mid-cycles. So, the presentation, when I give them I don't give them to just boys or just girls. I always mix them up.

In Luke's classroom, like Evan's, children often chose to work with children of various ages and abilities. One difference was the children in Luke's classroom showed greater enjoyment for working on the floor. They would choose a rolled rug from a wicker

basket to place atop the area rug to denote the amount of space needed for their particular work materials. There were rugs of various sizes, which Luke informed me was a conscious choice because certain works were long or wide and needed more space, while others were more compact.

In both lower elementary classrooms the children chose whom to work and socialize with in the morning and when they returned from recess. Weather depending the children had equal access to the outdoor space to perform work. They were welcome to bring didactic materials from the classroom to picnic tables outside. If they chose to bring materials from the classroom outside they were expected to bring an underlay to place on the picnic table before arranging the material. They could choose to perform a practical life activity outside, as well. For instance, on one day children were picking ripe loquats making sure to leave the new buds fully intact. On another day, a child swept the cement walkway leading to the backdoor of the classroom. Having no assigned seats allowed the children to practice freedom with responsibility.

Luke and Evan supported the no assigned seats expectation put in place by Dr. Montessori over one hundred years ago. They encouraged children to work with all others regardless of age or ability level. In addition, they welcomed the child-directed choice to rearrange the furniture and work in the outdoor space. No assigned seats allowed the child to move freely throughout the room without consequence.

No Gender Specific Talk of Occupations

Luke and Evan made the decision to present topics that were gender specific in society as gender-neutral in the classroom. They each felt this choice empowered the child to choose freely, free from what society deemed as normal or acceptable. The language Luke and Evan used to express the lessons in the lower elementary Montessori albums was not gender specific. The nomenclature work (typically in the form of sorting cards with pictures and definitions) never named a gender with a career choice. For example, a fireman was referred to as a fire person. A postman was called a post-person. The children were not given the expectation that certain careers were for men and others for woman. Evan noted that the decision behind such close attention to language was a way of modeling how anyone and everyone interested in pursuing a career was capable of it. He made notice of how Dr. Montessori was a great example of how anyone can be any career.

Evan: You can't be a doctor. Yes she can (laughs). You know, and she was. You know my goodness! Look at that! She is on the currency, how about that!

Luke and Evan's decision to keep the talk about career choices neutral was their way of empowering the children to decide what they wanted to do. They were telling students they could do anything they wanted to do, regardless of their gender.

A Celebration of Difference

Every April 20th Luke and Evan's classroom participated in a school-wide peace march. Their decision to participate as a class represented their belief that regardless of who we were in the world, we all deserved the fundamental need for peace. Each shared with me dialogue about the origin of this school-wide practice and how the march was a representation for the children that overcoming difference and coming together peacefully was possible and felt good.

I happened to be observing in Evan's classroom the day before the school-wide peach march. The peace march was an annual celebration held on campus. All classrooms participated in this celebration. In Evan's classroom preparation for the peace march included students' creation of cardboard signs to wear on their person around the campus as an expression of words or symbols emblematic of peace. Students arrived the morning before the peace march with square or rectangular slabs of cardboard from home. Students also brought other goods indicative of a celebration including fresh flowers, a flag, and homemade loquat pie. Pie was a rare occurrence at River Montessori given its strict dietary guidelines. This was how Evan described the march to me:

E: So, our peach march is something that our class holds annually. What we normally do is we march around the campus with flags, and banners, and different shakers (things like that) that we've made and we present to each classroom with a song and a bouquet of flowers. After our peace march, the children come together and recite poems that they've written, reports that they've written about people in the past or people currently working today towards peace. It's a very exciting day so when they enter the classroom (the day before) all I needed to do

was kind of stay out of their way and provide my assistance whenever I saw an opportunity. Sometimes it was getting them oil pastels. Sometimes it was getting them a piece of cardboard, but other than that because they have experienced previous years just allowing them to unfold their creative energies and work collaboratively.

Evan spent the day before the peace march assisting students in their creative endeavors.

Although I did not have the opportunity to observe preparation for the peace march in Luke's classroom I know his classroom actively engaged in their own creative preparation for the march. However, Luke shared a story with me about a child in his classroom seeking clarification on the notion of fairness. In response to her curiosity Luke brought her a resource on the justice system. He reassured me that this resource was age appropriate and allowed this child to examine the concept of actions and ramifications. In a similar vein, he spoke about the need for fairness when establishing the rules for outdoor recreational games created by the children during recess. He laughed because the children spent more time creating fair rules, approved by all involved, than enacting them during the game.

The notion of difference, peace, and fairness was evident in the peace march and within the classroom. Luke and Evan created opportunities for the children to practice peace and fairness aligned with notions of care and culturally responsive teaching.

Part Two: Pedagogical Choices Aligned with Care and Cultural Responsiveness

In this section of the chapter I discuss the pedagogic choices of the two guides in this study with regards to care and cultural responsiveness. Four (4) specific kinds of choices comprised this pedagogic decision-making: (1) using key lessons and follow-up suggestions; (2) facilitating collaborative learning; (3) enacting the great lessons; and (4) implementing specific classroom discipline. In the discussion that follows, I present each of these four choices and provide examples of lessons and strategies that Luke and Evan implemented in their classrooms.

Pedagogic Choice One: Using Key Lessons and Follow-Up

The first pedagogic choice that emerged for both guides was using key lessons and follow up suggestions. By this I am referring to how Luke and Evan drew from key lessons and follow-up in ways that aligned with both care and cultural responsiveness. Key lessons were told in a story format. Storytelling, as a pedagogical choice, was supported by the framework of culturally responsive pedagogy as a way to connect curriculum content to a wider variety of students learning styles'. Gay (2000) posited lessons told in a story format were more effective with all students. They placed the content within a

meaningful, interesting context, which increased student's motivation to learn. Noddings (1992) might appreciate that the lower elementary Montessori children were invited to key lessons, not mandated to attend. They had a choice to come to the lesson or continue with their current work. She believed children should always have a choice to pursue their interests. The key lesson, aside from being told in a story format, connected the child's current understanding and background knowledge to the subject matter content knowledge this practice was aligned with care and culturally responsive teaching. Using key lessons and follow-up suggestions was observed in three (3) different kinds of lessons: (1): velocity; (2) mammals; and (3) parts of a flower.

Key Lessons: Story Format

Velocity (Evan)

Evan had three children gathered on a rug in the front of the classroom with a wall of windows behind them. The velocity materials included word problem cards stored in labeled envelopes, place value cubes, and skittles. All materials were neatly arranged on the rug. Evan facilitated the experience, while students problem solved and used the materials of the lesson. Evan questioned and prompted and guided students thought process using prompts. This was Evan's reflection of the decisions he made during the velocity lesson.

Evan: Before we begin working with time, distance, velocity, I want to make sure that they know what velocity means or what are ways of measuring distance and

time? Do I say I am how many seconds old? Do I say so many months old? Or do we choose years? Or the distance from our house, say they are sent to the market, are we going to use inches, centimeters?

Evan began the lesson by asking students what they knew about how to solve the word problems written on the note cards. He restated what the word problem asked of the children. He explained what they knew. Then, he asked the children what the word problem asked of them? What did it want them to find? If students were unsure Evan directed their attention to where the question mark was in the word problem. If the problem asked how many hours it took the plane to travel x miles then they came up with a distance using the materials. Evan explained how some cards asked for time, while others asked for distance. As the students selected word problems Evan coached them along.

Evan: What do we know? We know it travels 1,600 miles and 4 hours. Let's distribute 2 thousand evenly. There you go. Exchange 10 hundreds. (The students distribute evenly between 4 skittles. Next, they place 10 bars on top of the hundreds cubes. Evan noticed the children were becoming confused.) There are too many hands! Let's start over!

During the lesson experience a child in a different part of the room moved too quickly in front of the rug where his lesson on velocity took place. He made a public noticing about the child's hair while he walked past the rug. He mentioned the movement of the hair and how you could measure its velocity.

Evan modeled the application of the concepts of the velocity lesson to a circumstance in the classroom. He made the conscious choice to place the language of the lesson into a more familiar context. Evan believed it was his duty to make these

noticings and in doing so he felt children would risk using the language of the curriculum in their daily talk and interactions.

Mammals (Evan)

Evan opened the key lesson on mammals with questions. He made the decision to relate the content he was teaching to the children's current understanding and background knowledge. The questions he chose to ask were leading questions. At times he posed questions that were literal in nature, other times the students answered questions that were inferential or experiential.

Evan: Did you know you are animals? I want to talk about animals. There are some animals who lay eggs. Is a chicken a mammal? That is a bird. Does it have a vertebrate? Let's break it down into five: birds, fish, reptiles, mammals, and amphibians.

In the middle of the lesson he shared some nomenclature cards with the students about the characteristics of mammals. On each card there was limited information about the qualities of mammals and a supporting picture. He continued to make connections between what he was reading and what students' knew or wondered about mammals.

Evan: I am going to read this to you. One thing we know about mammals is there body is covered by hair. Do we have hair? What is this picture of? A goat. Is a dinosaur a mammal?

Evan chose to keep this lesson short. Key lessons were told in a story format and kept brief. The goal of the key lesson, according to Evan, was to get the students interested and excited about a topic and then to release them to do self-study of an aspect

of the lesson. “Maybe you can do some research to see if their definitions are accurate. Did somebody say a whale? If they are mammals we need to do some research.”

After Evan suggested follow-up work for his students to explore based on their wonderings about mammals he could tell they were unsure of what to research so he offered them questions or prompts to focus their thinking about their chosen research topic.

Evan: Do whales have four limbs? They used to be on land? Is that so? Is that a truthful statement? Go to the library and get a book...but before...mammals have a heart divided into four chambers? You might want to do some research. What do the four chambers do? What do the muscles do? [These are] Things to find out.

This lesson was approximately 15 minutes long. The students gathered around Evan on the floor as he read from nomenclature cards and posed questions related to the information. Evan was very expressive and animated as he told this story. He consistently asked clarification questions in order to check for students understanding of the characteristics of mammals. Three students left this lesson charged to do partner research about whales and the types of hearts they had. They immediately went to the library after this lesson to collect resources to inform their understanding.

Parts of a Flower (Luke)

The parts of a flower lesson began with students’ observations of a blooming amaryllis outside of the classroom. One day the children saw an amaryllis from the blooming plant

on the ground fully intact as if it had been intentionally cut from its stem. The children approached Luke with the flower asking for his thoughts on how it came to be plucked from the other flowers on the plant. They came to the conclusion that “somebody had brushed against it and the stalk just snapped away.” The children chose to retain the flower and place it within a glass vase as a table arrangement. Luke chose to take advantage of this flower's place in the classroom gathering a group of children to draw the object and in turn work on skills related to writing development. He intentionally chose students who had drawn objects from nature before. He began the conversation by talking about how they had all experienced drawing and how today they were going to try to paint a picture of this object, not with lines, but with words. “Usually I try to illicit from them a conversation or a dialogue about what it is that they see and then we write it down.”

They talked about colors, sizes of the leaves and petals, which led them to a discussion about the parts of a flower.

Luke: We have looked at venation of leaves. We talked about roots and stems and so I was pulling into our dialogue or conversation those terms we have had before.

He mentioned scientific terms like corolla, gamma-petalist, and poly-petalist. Next, the children chose to take in the scent the flower gave off. From here the conversation divulged into a debate about the flower's heuristic qualities. How the children described the texture of the flower.

Luke made the conscious choice to model his written description of the flower. He had all of the same writing tools as the children. He modeled how to hold the pencil.

Where to place the pencil when he was in between thoughts: on the wooden pencil holder. He created complete sentences with descriptive details about the characteristics of the flower. This was his reflection of his choice to record his descriptions of the flower:

Luke: I do not necessarily always share it with them, but I do just sit and write with them just to model writing with a pencil and sharing our thoughts. It also gives me something to do so I can covertly watch what they are doing and still have my hands busy

I was intrigued with a particular question Luke posed at the end of this writing development lesson using the amaryllis. Luke asked the children what they would ask the flower if they were able to communicate with it. He connected this pedagogical choice to a book called *Rose* he had read a few years ago written by Koch (1970). In the book the author asks the rose “Where did you get your red?” He recalled the first time he implemented this strategy was four years prior when the classroom had a visiting tortoise named Boris. He wondered about the tortoise aloud with the children asking Boris “What does your shell feel like? What is it like to feel a heaviness when you move?” He confessed initially the children found these questions to be humorous however, over time such questions were stimulating allowing a different kind of written freedom than the children had experienced prior to this style of questioning.

Luke and Evan both used a story format to share key lessons with their students. They made decisions that made the lesson interaction dynamic and interactive, as well as relevant to students’ experiences and background knowledge. They selectively chose the

context they told their story within to be interesting and connected to the child's understanding a known strategy of care and culturally responsive teaching.

Pedagogic Choice Two: Collaborative Learning

The second pedagogic choice that emerged for both guides was using collaborative learning. By this I am referring to how Luke and Evan drew from the practice of collaborative learning. In doing so they fostered human connectedness, which was a central feature of care and culturally responsive teaching. Their goal as a guide was to promote peer communication and healthful peer relationships amongst all children.

Collaborative learning was enacted in two (2) different kinds of classroom examples: (1) grace and courtesy; and (2) having hosts and hostesses to sponsor new to the classroom students.

Grace and Courtesy

Luke and Evan had high standards for grace and courtesy in the lower elementary Montessori classroom. Children were expected to use appropriate language syntax to interact with their peers and with guides. Luke and Evan were models of how to approach children with whom they would like to work and also how to leave children when they needed a break or to use the restroom. I chose to share Luke's perspective on

grace and courtesy because he shared his decision-making as well as his pedagogical strategy with the children. Evan used similar grace and courtesy lessons in his classroom, thus I did not want to be repetitive so I focused on Luke in this example.

Luke explained how he used a lot of grace and courtesy lessons with children when they were new to the community. He modeled and provided opportunities for students to communicate with one another in a way he felt was supportive of work. He discussed specific ways he made decisions about how he modeled and provided opportunities for students to practice grace and courtesy (what Luke referred to as a critical component of creating the right atmosphere for students to become normalized).

Luke: I do a lot of grace and courtesy lessons. It is speaking with the children about how you can communicate with another person. What it means to be a work partner? How you can come to a lesson? If you are wanting to use a partner, a friend's pencil or material, rather than grabbing it. We have grace and courtesy over our customs, which is that we say somebody's name, they say ours in return, so it would be like Nathalie and she would say, "Yes Luke." And I could say, "May I borrow a pen?" And then I am always prepared to hear yes or no from them. So that is a very basic grace and courtesy lesson that we have very early on [in the school year].

Luke continued to express language he used when supporting a non-normalized child in a lower elementary Montessori classroom. He thought aloud about the decisions he made to support the role of work. He explained how he taught students to leave their work when they needed to get a drink of water or use the restroom. Or, how he made the decision to model for students the intricacies of how to interact with one another and work because modeling enhanced the likelihood for positive, productive collaborative work between children.

Luke: If you are going to leave your work for a period of time and you are working with a partner how we would want to let that partner know that we were going to get a drink of water and we would be right back or we were going to the restroom and we would be right back, so that the person is not confused when they look up and they find that we are missing.

Luke's grace and courtesy lessons supported children's collaborative learning. Teaching students how to explicitly communicate with one another when they were engaged in a lesson and needed to leave and return created more positive collaboration for all children in the collaborative group. The above grace and courtesy dialogue occurred on a daily basis in both Luke and Evan's classrooms by all children working collaboratively.

Hosts and Hostesses

Evan used hosts and hostesses to welcome new students to the classroom. He felt it was a supportive pedagogical strategy that would strengthen peer collaborative work. He could have showed the new students the room, but instead chose to place the child at the center of the room, instead of himself. He felt it empowered the child host or hostess and made the new children feel more comfortable.

On the first day of school in Evan's classroom he paired children new to the lower elementary community with returning children who knew the existing policies and procedures of the classroom. Evan referred to the classroom helpers as hosts and hostesses. He felt this pedagogical strategy was valuable for the children because it showed them "the ins and outs" of being a student in his classroom. Evan encouraged his

hosts and hostesses to sponsor children of different ages and genders. He never limited how children interacted with one another.

Pedagogic Choice Three: The Great Lessons

The third pedagogic choice that emerged for both guides was using the great lessons. It was customary for authentic Montessori programs to begin their academic years with what Dr. Montessori called the great lessons. These lessons were meant to establish excitement in the child for the 3-year elementary curriculum, while also connecting the curriculum to the universe. Like key lessons, great lessons were told in story format. Using a storytelling format with motivating props and visual aids aligned with pedagogical practices supportive of care and culturally responsive teaching. The great lessons provided the child with a sense of who they were in the larger universe and how they came to be. In addition, great lessons were based on a variety of historical narratives about the creation of Earth, numbers, and languages, which aligned with Gay's (2000) pedagogic choice to inform students by telling them the whole story, with varied voices and perspectives.

The Coming of Life (Luke)

Luke shared *The Coming of Life* lesson with me in our first interview. Luke described the great lessons in his own words as:

Luke: [Great lessons are] A series of five lessons...dealing with exposing the elementary classroom to the concepts of our universe...we are trying to pull in the children with some dramatics, some flair, and a lot of detail.

Luke felt comfortable making edits to Dr. Montessori's original stories. He made the conscious decision to do so when telling *The Coming of Life* story in his classroom. He gave me two specific authors, Rachel Carson and Joseph Campbell, who informed his decision-making when telling this story, as well as different fields of study he read up on including works from botanists, zoologists, and scientists. Again, the original story, what Luke referred to as the "basic story structure," was acquired from the AMI trainer, thus all Montessorians had that script. River Montessori supported Luke in his decision to bring relevant background knowledge not available during Montessori's day to the story for relevancy and more accurate information based on the world today and current scientific knowledge.

Luke chose to take out the chart and invited me to sit beside him as he told *The Coming of Life* story, as if I were a student in his elementary classroom. The chart was approximately 9-feet long and very elaborate with a timeline and various plants and animals in order of their existence on Earth. Luke had made and colored in this chart, which took him "60 – 100 hours" to finish. Luke began by prefacing that all Montessori

great lessons began with a recap based on what information about the universe the child had been introduced to last. This was built into the story, as well as the supportive materials that corresponded to the story. So, the beginning of the lesson was the guide calling into the child's mind "things that had been done before" or "a recap or review."

Luke: We talk about that initial lesson we had about the lithosphere, the hydrosphere, and the atmosphere. We talk about the creation of liquids and solids on our Earth, taking its form. We talk about all the water that is on our planet. And then we start to talk about life and the first organisms. What it means to be a living organism. How you need to be able to take in food. How you need to be able to excrete waste. How you need to be able to reproduce and make more like yourselves.

Luke explained how the chart started off rolled up and he unrolled it like a scribe as he approached each new era in history. He believed this elaborate chart provided students with "something to attract their attention" and to let them "wonder about." The chart indicated when a new species was introduced in history, when it went extinct, or lines indicating its continuation. Luke explained how he made the decision to revisit this chart frequently throughout the year as they learned more about the science and history curriculum.

Luke: If they [the students] are doing a report on Texas we talk about the Permian Period or if they are talking about mammals, wondering where they came from...we come back to it often to review. [The Coming of Life lessons] Main focus was to talk about how nature is always seeking a balance and how nature is trying out different types of experiments to be able to maintain a balance on our Earth.

The lesson Luke shared with me was two single-spaced pages of text. For the purpose of this study, I chose to summarize the lesson into its main points. As stated above the lesson began with a recap of the lesson previous to this one and opportunities

for students to wonder about what they saw on the part of the chart revealed at the beginning. The middle of the lesson introduced each organism on Earth starting with simple organisms, more complex organisms, and then fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and finally humans. He told this story to me from memory.

Luke began the middle of the lesson this way:

...Individual organisms are a means to be able to achieve balance in the oceans...so the first job of these creatures was to be able to use salts to purify the seas.

Luke went on to explain that these salts “were too itchy so they would start to develop a hard covering or shell to be able to protect their body.” Next, came conversations about more complex organisms including a definition of a complex organism and an example. Then, Luke talked about reproduction or the splitting off of organisms. As time on Earth progressed organisms “became ever more complex...there was the incorporation of legs or lungs, organs or mouths.”

In the middle of the lesson Luke thought aloud for me about the decisions he made when introducing more complex organisms on Earth. He stated that in *The Coming of Life* great lesson:

Luke: There’s a lot of focus on how these creatures set the space and did work for a certain period of time and if they are extinct...they were able to do their job for a fixed period of time and then something came in and has been doing the job ever since. In the case of crinoids, it was the corals. We talk about plants and how these were a type of living organism that were able to make their own food using sunlight, salt, and the water.

Luke wanted me to know that he told this story in chronological order. That the Earth began with water and air. Life on Earth started out with simple organisms that became

more complex overtime. He made the decision to move from less complex organisms to more complex as the story revealed itself in relation to what history and science knew about what happened in each era in history. He talked about fish and their “rigid skeleton” which according to Luke “set the tone for how skeletons are support structures that allow muscles to attach to them.” Muscles were the gateway for conversations about larger creatures with “swifter motions.”

At this time Luke introduced plants, which he told his students were the beginning of different invertebrates on Earth. There was discussion of amphibians: what they are, how they became present on Earth, and how they survive. After amphibians came reptiles and their story including how they lived and reproduced. Luke shared the story of dinosaurs next. He brought to life the actual size of these creatures stating:

They had such an incredible length their head was larger than an entire humans’ body...how they had two brains, one inside their head...a second brain in their tail.

Luke stated that smaller creatures moved to areas of the Earth where these dinosaurs were not, in order to protect themselves, which leads him to a conversation about warm-blooded mammals and their role on Earth.

Luke: We talk about how mammals care for their young. How they actually hold their eggs within their body until they are able to give birth to them. And then they feed them with milk from their bodies and they remain with their parents for quite some time. We talk about how birds build circular nests and how they take care of their young. But we also state that birds...they’ve got hollow bones, they’re very light, so they are able to move and soar through the air...A lot of the emphasis here being mammals and birds are unique in the animal kingdom, since they protect their young.

By the end of the story the entire 9-foot long chart was unrolled and revealed to the child. As a group they looked back over the chart and wondered and questioned retelling parts of the story. Luke ended the story with this thought:

Luke: It was as if the Earth needed all this time to be able to prepare the Earth, so that humans could be here because if humans had appeared at any other time during the history of the Earth they would not have been able to survive.

This lesson took about 40 minutes to tell depending on the number of questions children had for Luke. When the lesson was over Luke intentionally left the chart out for the day for children to “stop by, to look at, to wonder, to talk with their friends about.” He stated how sometimes the chart would stay out for a few days depending on the amount of foot traffic it was attracting. Like all Montessori materials, this chart was always available to the children within a wooden chart holder.

According to Luke *The Coming of Life* great lesson began anytime new children came into the room. In actuality the whole sequence of all five great lessons were introduced in order for the new child.

Luke: I extend an invitation to the entire community, usually a lot of children come and some people working at their tables stop by and listen. The children who I make sure are present are those children who are new to the community.

Luke made the choice to selectively choose which children needed to be present, while also inviting others who have already heard the story to hear it again. He felt this lesson encapsulated many historical wonderings and scientific wonderings that all children could apply to their own work in the curriculum. He felt this lesson served as an opportunity for the child to wonder about a specific aspect in history or science, which could be translated into individual or group research reports.

The Coming of Life great lesson was told using a story format and filled with detailed, accurate scientific concepts and historical narratives. This great lesson provided the students with a comprehensive perspective on the creation of the Earth and all of the life that inhabits the Earth helping the Earth to maintain balance.

Pedagogic Choice Four: Discipline Strategies

The fourth pedagogic choice that emerged for both guides occurred in the context of discipline, specifically the practice of mediation. By this I am referring to how Luke and Evan drew from the practice of non-violent communication and compassion when facilitating dialogue between unsettled children. In doing so they showed engrossment and motivational displacement, two qualities aligned with care, as well as high expectations for students' peer relationships. Culturally responsive teaching cared about the psycho emotional well being of all students.

Mediation (Luke & Evan)

Luke and Evan's pedagogical management strategies were greatly influenced by Deb, River Montessori's founder, and other resources including *The Compassionate Classroom* and *Nonviolent Communication*. I watched as Luke and Evan made sense of the school's ideology when making decisions about how to approach and redirect

children challenged to find a harmonious balance in their interactions. On one occasion Luke noticed two boys who were working with beads. He observed how the situation of sharing responsibility was becoming heated and made the decision to interject.

Luke: You can use your hands in such a way that the beads can be silent. We need our beads to be protected. I know that you have the ability to silently and carefully pick up the beads. Is there anything that you need? What do you think we can do so there aren't too many hands in the tray at one time?

Luke asked several questions that suggested the boys share the responsibility by coming up with a plan. Together they determined how many beads one would sort before it was the others' turn. They also had a signal that told the other it was his turn. At the end of this mediation session both boys agreed to the system they helped to create and spent the rest of the lesson sharing the beads as decided upon together.

Later that morning Luke saw two children who were off task. He chose to address them after observing their silly behavior for a few minutes.

Luke: Is this your workspace? Where is your workspace? Is it something you are working on still? Are you somebody who would like me to tell you what to do or are you somebody who wants to be their own author to their life?

I heard Evan use a similar management strategy in his classroom. He used the phrase "navigator of your own ship" to encourage his students to be more responsible with their choices.

Evan spoke of the influence television had on children. He referred to the imprints that television made as graphic stimulus, which at times exposed the child to aggression and explosive dramatics. In his opinion, television made the lessons of the Montessori lower elementary curriculum less fascinating than they would be with less

exposure to television. He connected children's time in front of the television with acts of aggression in the classroom. Evan believed in communication and worked hard to model exemplary language choices for students to use when they disagreed with one another. Evan felt that sometimes the child needed time to collect his strong emotions before mediating the situation with his peers. He honored this emotional need by accepting the child's feelings granting the child his space. Evan expounded the need for space in embarrassing situations as well as angry situations.

Evan often told personal stories in his classroom of times when he was angry or embarrassed and how he too needed space in order to consider his feelings. He chose to show his vulnerable side with his students to put them at ease. Evan was a father of a child at River Montessori in the neighboring Children's House classroom. He often shared funny and frustrating stories of being a father of a young child. The children loved hearing his animated tales.

Evan: I want it to be where if they are having a disagreement, but they're still able to have a conversation about their disagreement, then I am not really needed at that point. I can stay close. I can observe...if there is a situation where it is getting to a place where they are beginning to yell and they are interrupting, trying to speak over another, then at that point it's gotten to be too much for them. And in a similar way with other things, I will now involve myself.

Evan began the mediation by telling the children what he had observed between those involved in the situation. "I see that our voices are raised. I see that we are getting really close to each other." After this statement he invited all involved to find a comfortable place to sit and talk. His first goal was to calm the physical bodies of the child. To get them a tissue, give them a hug, or render a different form of care conducive to the child's

need. Next, he stated he was there to support them and assist them in resolving this conflict. At this time Evan stated the process of mediation as written down in the mediation booklets designed by Jerry, the elementary coordinator. Each child had an opportunity to share their side of the story for as long as they saw fit with one caveat, no repetition of feelings or events. Once each child shared his or her perspective Evan asked if they heard and understood each side of the story. “Can you see from their perspective what it is that is upsetting to them?” After, he posed the question “What are we willing to do to prevent something like this from happening?” Again each child shared his solution. Evan concluded the mediation episode with “Can we agree to that or are we okay with this? Is this something we are comfortable with?” Upon agreement (by all involved) the situation was resolved and the children returned to their work.

Luke followed the same mediation structures as Evan. He too invited all children involved to sit and talk. If at anytime during the conversation another child’s name was mentioned then he sent a child to get him or her. “We always included everybody who was a participant in it.” Like Evan his next step was to care for the child with hurt feelings or in physical pain. Once the child in question had been consoled the conversations began. “Will you use your words to share your experience?” Again he repeated the rules that you do not interrupt another and you do not repeat your experiences. Next, every child in the group said the names of the others followed by a statement telling the others their stories were heard and understood. Finally, they generated what it was they needed so this would not happen in the future.

It was evident Luke and Evan used similar language in the same order to resolve conflicts in the lower elementary classroom. The mediation booklets created by Jerry were a reflection of Deb, River Montessori's founder's perspective on social development. What was unique about the mediation "sit and talks" was while Luke and Evan facilitated the mediation process all the other children were seemingly engaged in their work. The children knew not to interrupt the conflict resolution process. They held their questions until Luke and Evan left the conversation

Chapter VII: Conclusions and Implications

The goal of this study was to examine how two lower elementary Montessori guides made decisions on a daily basis within a Montessori prepared environment. My intentions were to investigate the types of decisions made by lower elementary Montessori guides and the origins of these decisions. Investigating what characterized lower elementary Montessori guide decision-making was an angle of investigation lacking in the academic educational literature in both the Montessori paradigm and the teacher decision-making literature. Specifically, I wondered if lower elementary Montessori guides had more opportunities to make decisions aligned with care and culturally responsive teaching, given the overlapping tenet amongst the three theories was support of the development of the whole child. The following questions guided this inquiry:

- 1) What defining characteristics operated in the decision-making of guides in the Montessori elementary classroom?
- 2) How was care and cultural responsiveness understood and approached in the decision-making of guides in the Montessori lower elementary classroom?

In chapter 4, I shared a long vignette in order to describe River Montessori. I sought to provide a detailed account of who River Montessori was and the beliefs and values held

and expected at this school. The themes that emerged from my interviews with Jerry, the elementary coordinator, and Deb, the founder, as well as from various school produced documentation was River Montessori was a school that believed in: (1) learning as a process; (2) producing self-knowledge in the child; (3) respecting the authentic nature of the child; (4) mandating specific policies and procedures; (5) supporting a prepared environment; (6) recognizing the Montessori teacher as a guide; (7) implementing a unique policy on discipline; and (8) communicating with families with transparency.

In chapters 5 and 6, I described the characteristics that operated in the decision-making of the two lower elementary Montessori guides in this study, Luke and Evan. Drawing from the theoretical frameworks of care (Noddings, 1992; 2005) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; 2002) I examined the decisions made by Luke and Evan. Three themes emerged in relation to the characteristics that operated in the decision-making of the guides in this study: (1) AMI training; (2) teacher improvisation based on student observation; and (3) school ideology. When comparing the decisions made by Luke and Evan to theorized care and culturally responsive teaching there were several points of overlap including: (1) sustaining relationships and creating a cohesive community; (2) respecting students' ideas inside the classroom; (3) responsibility for materials, people, and animals both inside and outside of the classroom; and (4) showing concern about social awareness and difference.

In the sections below, I will discuss the findings in this study in relation to the existing literature on teacher decision-making. Then, I discuss how decisions made by Luke and Evan aligned with the theory of care (Noddings, 1992; 2005) and culturally

responsiveness teaching (Gay, 2000; 2002) including where they departed or fell short of normative understandings of these two frameworks. For now, let's focus on what characteristics operated in Luke and Evan's decision-making as lower elementary Montessori guides and how these decisions related to what we know about teacher decision-making from the existing literature.

What Defining Characteristics Operated in the Decision-Making of Guides in the Montessori Lower Elementary Classroom?

AMI Training

Studies of experienced teachers report that teachers' sense of who they are plays a significant role in the way they make curricular decisions (Hawthorne, 1992; Johnston, 1993; Kennedy, 2005; Rex & Nelson, 2004). This suggests that teachers' curricular decision-making is primarily influenced by personal and moral values. Curricular decision-making for Luke and Evan was primarily dependent upon their AMI training. In chapter 5, I asked Luke about the AMI albums he created in his training process. He stated:

For the Montessori guide it is our constant reference for sequence of the lessons we are providing for the children. It allows us to see all of the different parallels that are going on within the classroom.

I never saw Luke or Evan use an album as a reference in any of my observations in their classrooms. Key lessons were told in a story format from memory. Luke and Evan explained the goal of the key lesson was to allow the child to connect to key facts

within the lesson in a natural way, for the child to be left wondering something related to the key facts. Luke and Evan were taught to honor the child's unique ideas, connections, and curiosities allowing the child to later discover for himself through independent research.

Luke and Evan did not have to figure out which tools to use for what lesson and how to best use the tool to convey the meaning of the objective. The Montessori didactic materials were designed for one purpose and contained a system of self-check, so even students knew when they performed the work correctly and when they made a mistake. Thus, Luke and Evan did not spend time making materials. There was a full set of AMI approved didactic materials in each of their lower elementary Montessori classrooms and they were trained by the AMI trainer to use the tools in a specific way using specific, precise and cogent language.

Both guides in this study recognized the role human tendencies played in the design of the prepared environment for the lower elementary Montessori child including: (1) ordering the environment to be clean and simple, not cluttered; (2) using the fundamental needs of humans to connect students to the curriculum and each other; and (3) facilitating and fostering freedom with responsibility. They made deliberate decisions in their classrooms to promote and maintain these human tendencies at all times.

Guide Improvisation Based on Student Observation

Teacher decision-making is recognized as “personal practical knowledge” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), “craft knowledge” (Zeichner, Tabachnick, & Desmore, 1987), and “strategic knowledge” (Shulman, 1986). Teachers make curricular choices about what to teach, even within a planned curriculum (Hunter, 1994; Pang, 2001; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007; Taylor, 1970; Yinger, 1978). Experts suggest teachers make decisions about what to teach and how to teach based on the observed needs of their students. In accordance, Luke and Evan made decisions about what key lessons to teach based on student observation. Both guides were prepared to present any key lesson at any time dependent upon students’ developmental needs, interests, observations, and wonderings. The key lesson was in the guide’s memory bank. It was accessible to Luke and Evan at a moments notice. Having the scripted key lessons, or the planned curriculum, memorized allowed Luke and Evan to attend to students’ needs more readily. Two examples of how the guides attended to students’ needs in the lower elementary Montessori classroom were first by removing obstacles in the way of the child’s development and second by capitalizing on opportune moments to invite a child to a lesson. Luke and Evan believed in inviting a child to a lesson, for which that child had the power and authority to decline the invitation.

In chapter 5, Luke and Evan shared insight with me about decisions made in the moment based on the observation of students. Each guide attempted to turn a child’s

connections, wonderings, experiences, and noticings into something purposeful and connected to the curriculum.

Evan: I feel like I am constantly, constantly trying to find ways to connect whatever it is that we are seeing or observing, that they are saying, into something purposeful.

Luke explained it as, looking for that moment when he could really see that the child was inspired or intrigued by something in the classroom or outside and taking advantage of this moment by encouraging the child to learn more.

When students arrived Luke and Evan took advantage of the morning greeting and often used this exchange to listen attentively to students' interests, which allowed them to direct the child's interests to a specific Montessori work. Evan mentioned how if a child entered the room excited about an upcoming trip to a different country he would entice that child to learn about the geography of that country, or their way of life. "I had a child that went to Switzerland and we had an opportunity to talk about well let's look at the geography of Switzerland."

Luke and Evan also improvised from the Montessori key lesson script when offering follow-up suggestions. Again, each guide watched the children during the key lesson looking for aspects of the lesson where the children or child was the most engaged or intrigued. They then offered suggestions based on individual connections, wonderings, and questions. I witnessed Luke connecting multiplication work on the multiplication checkerboard didactic material to a context more familiar and amenable for his students, crystals and baked goods. Luke and Evan did not require the child to act on

the offered follow-up suggestions. Evan explained sometimes the child connected to the lesson in a unique way on his own leading to relevant follow-up work.

School Ideology

In traditional classrooms it is certain that standards and tests affect teachers' decision-making (Boote, 2006; Hatch, 2002; Pelletier, Legault, & Seguin, 2002; Valli, Croninger, Chambliss, Graeber, & Buese, 2008). River Montessori operated outside of any institutional guidelines. Luke and Evan did not have any "pressures from above," or pressures from the state governing the decisions they made in their classrooms.

However, Luke and Evan often referred to the school's ideology as the reasoning behind decisions made in their classrooms. The influence of River Montessori's ideology on Luke and Evan's decision-making occurred in four (4) ways for the lower elementary Montessori guides in this study, including: (1) approaching and practicing social and emotional development; (2) limiting the use of technology; (3) commenting on students' work; and (4) enriching the child's language development.

Luke stated, "The school itself has a very, very strong culture where we are balancing within the classroom environment academics and also social development."

One approach used by both Luke and Evan in the area of social and emotional development was modeling appropriate language and offering help when they saw that the child could not fix the situation with his or her peer or with their connection to the

work. Evan coached, “You need to hang in there. You need to be strong, retain purpose in your presence. Can you do this? Have your actions support your words.”

Luke and Evan supported the school’s ideology to limit the lower elementary Montessori child’s use of technology. This decision was related to the extant literature about the correlation between hours of television watched or videogames played and acts of violence in children. In the Community Handbook there were articles for the parents and families to read supporting the school’s ideology to limit the lower elementary child’s exposure to technology and media.

Luke and Evan relied upon school ideology when making decision about how to comment on students’ work. I noticed a similarity in the way Luke and Evan commented on students’ work. They never expressed a judgment about the work, like it was good or needed work. Instead they focused on aspects of the work that they could see followed by feeling words without judgment. Evan explained:

So instead of saying, oh this is beautiful, say I notice you have these blue clouds or sorry this blue sky with little parts where it’s a little bit darker. Is it sunrise or sunset?

River Montessori believed it was Luke and Evan’s job as lower elementary guides to use academic and scientific language with children. They believed such language enriched the experience for the child and gave the child the opportunity to share in a more complete understanding of the world.

An Interesting Finding Regarding Guide Decision-Making

One interesting finding that emerged from this study with regards to teacher decision-making was the strong impact that the guides' preparation program played in their decision-making as practicing guides. This finding stands in some contrast to the existing literature on traditional teacher decision-making that debates the extent to which teacher preparation programs play a long-lasting and impactful role in how teachers ultimately teach when in their own classrooms (Britzman, 1986; Hanrahan & Tate, 2001; Kagan, 1992; Lortie, 1975). While this is the case for teaching in general, this is particularly the case when considering preparing teachers to teach in ways that value difference, diversity, culture and social justice (Grant, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1999; McDonald, 2005; Sleeter, 2001). Both Lortie (1975) and Britzman (1986) point to the important role that individual teacher experiences in the classroom and personal autobiography, respectively, have on how teachers enact their teaching. More recent studies still suggest the strong role autobiography plays out in the way teachers make curricular decisions (Hawthorne, 1992; Johnston, 1993; Kennedy, 2005; Rex & Nelson, 2004). In addition, others point to the salient role that school context has on how teachers make decisions in their classroom practice (Boote, 2006; Hatch, 2002; Pelletier, Legault, & Seguin, 2002; Valli, Croninger, Chambliss, Graeber, & Buese, 2008).

In the case of Luke and Evan, however, guide training played a fundamental role in how they approached their classroom decision-making. Many daily decisions made in Luke and Evan's lower elementary Montessori classroom were directly related to their

AMI training. First, and foremost all of the key lessons shared with the students were captured and transcribed nearly verbatim from the trainer. This scripted text was the story the guide used when sharing the content of the key lesson. As noted above where the lower elementary guide had freedom to choose within the scripted key lesson was how they invited the child and which follow-up work they suggested. What amazed me was how Luke and Evan had committed all of the 2,000 plus key lessons to memory!

Luke and Evan learned from the AMI trainer how to deliver the key lesson to intentionally leave out important information. The guide was taught to honor the child's unique ideas, connections, and curiosities allowing the child to discover for himself after the key lesson through independent research. The key lesson was a conscious deliberate decision made by Luke and Evan to spark a child's interest through his or her imagination.

The lower elementary Montessori guides in this study also developed an eye for recognizing the child's emerging developmental sensitive period during their AMI training and concurrent time in experienced AMI trained veteran lower elementary guides' classrooms. They were taught to look for psychological indicators the child was exhibiting and then relate these indicators to the best key lessons that would embrace what the child needed to fulfill this emergent skill or competence.

Luke and Evan learned how to establish, uphold, and maintain Montessori's human tendencies during their AMI training. The role of human tendencies informed the decisions Luke and Evan made in regards to the classroom: (1) needing order; (2) learning about shared fundamental needs in order to promote community and

collaboration between all children; and (3) allowing the child freedom with responsibility to move about the classroom freely with purpose. Freedom with responsibility was especially salient before and after lunchtime.

According to Luke and Evan the goal of Montessori education was to create a child with independence that had the intrinsic motivation and initiative to engage in the Montessori work without the presence of the guide. They learned the value of work in their AMI training. Specific attention was given to the new to the classroom or non-normalized child, as this child needed more time and attention from the guide in order to develop the self-discipline and connection necessary to be successful in the lower elementary Montessori classroom.

How was Care and Cultural Responsive Understood and Approached in the Decision-Making of Guides in the Montessori Lower Elementary Classroom?

When examining the decisions made by Luke and Evan in relation to theories of care and culturally responsive teaching there were several points of overlap including: (1) sustaining relationships and creating a cohesive community; (2) respecting students' ideas inside the classroom; (3) responsibility for materials, people, and animals both inside and outside of the classroom; and (4) showing concern about social awareness and difference. In the section below, I will discuss the above decisions I saw Luke and Evan make in relation to the main tenets of care as theorized by Noddings (1992; 2005) and the

main tenets of culturally responsive teaching as theorized by Gay (2000; 2002).

Remember I argue care and culturally responsive teaching are inextricably intertwined.

Sustaining Relationships and Creating a Cohesive Community

I argue Noddings' (1992; 2005) notion of continuity, or continuous consecutive years with the same teacher in the same school building, is directly connected to Gay's (2000; 2002) notion of connectedness, community, and collaboration, main tenets of culturally responsive teaching (CRT). Both theories of care and culturally responsive teaching acknowledged, appreciated, and applied pedagogical actions aligned with developing the whole child, as well as a sense of belonging with others.

Both Luke and Evan recognized the value and importance of sustaining relationships and creating a cohesive community in their classroom, two key characteristics of both care and cultural responsiveness. Respect for sustaining relationship and community operated in three (3) ways for the guides in this study, including (1): continuity between student and guide over time; (2) continuity between the student and the school over time; and (3) perspectives about the importance of the collaborative work environment for students. Since, continuity is a structural component built into the Montessori environment I will focus on the third theme, the role Luke and Evan played in creating and sustaining a collaborative work environment for students in their care.

Both Noddings and Gay asserted classrooms enabling and practicing care and culturally responsive teaching were classrooms that were proficient collaborators. Noddings (1992) believed, “Interpersonal reasoning is necessary in caring—the capacity to communicate, share decision-making, arrive at compromises, and support each other in solving everyday problems” (p. 53). Gay (2000) asserted:

“Cooperative learning prompts interethnic group social interactions and friendships, increased academic achievement in a variety of subject areas, improved levels of confidence and efficacy” for all students (p. 167).

In Luke and Evan’s lower elementary Montessori classrooms collaborative learning was understood and approached in specific ways supportive of both care and culturally responsive teaching. Highlights included explicitly teaching children the value of work and how to engage in healthful work practices; mutual aid, interdependence, and opportunities for reciprocity; confidence and the belief that children could discover and learn without the guide present; and modeling and facilitating the creation of collaboration with peers and the environment.

Respecting Students’ Ideas Inside and Outside of the Classroom

According to Gay (2000) “Curriculum content must be accessible to students and connected to their lives and experiences outside of school” (p.111). Like Gay, Noddings (1992) asserted classrooms should be places where students were encouraged to act, wonder, and pursue issues of interest. Both Luke and Evan recognized the value and

importance of holding respect for students' ideas, and in this case, ideas that might be viewed as inappropriate or controversial to discuss in an elementary classroom community. Luke and Evan understood and approached respect for students' ideas in two (2) key ways: (1): welcoming discussions of religion in the classroom; and (2) giving students the opportunity to discuss issues related to life and death.

The Montessori philosophy was supportive of peace education including dialogue, research, and religious practices in school. Luke and Evan were allowed to select the resources from which they taught religion as well as follow the child's lead even when the children were curious about topics typically omitted from the standard curriculum. In Evan's classroom I witnessed a child-initiated conversation on the existence of God. Evan invited this discussion and facilitated the conversation without exposing his personal beliefs by posing questions like:

“Are there, in some religions, Goddesses or are they always masculine or male? Are there any religions that are no longer practiced? So, do some religions go extinct?”

Luke shared the religious shelf with me in his classroom where students accessed information on various religious denominations. In addition, the key lessons comprising the lower elementary Montessori curriculum also explored religion.

Noddings (1992) was in favor of appreciatively studying the ordinary tasks of life including nutrition, spirituality, life and death. Although Gay (2000) does not specify the need to teach about life and death she was certainly supportive of choosing and delivering content with a meaningful presence in the life of the child. Luke and Evan were supported by River Montessori to explicitly teach sex education in the elementary

classroom. They were given the approved resources to teach from and each selected the best time to invite children to listen to the story of plant, animal, and human reproduction. It was clear Luke and Evan understood and approached sensitive topics in their daily classroom practices. They shared the text *How Babies are Made* with accurate scientific language, images, and depictions of reality.

Responsibility for Materials, People, and Animals Both in and Outside of the Classroom

Luke and Evan made decisions in their classrooms to model and practice respect for all materials, instruments, objects, animals, and plant life in and outside of the classroom. Explicit care was given to modeling respect for the didactic materials, furniture, charts, and kitchen supplies in each classroom.

Luke: There is always a set up, a carrying out of the action, and a clean up involved in all of the materials. So that also lends very strongly to the sequencing, the order, and also the respect for the materials.

Evan's example, "You don't put the book open-faced down, because that hurts the binding, so introducing the idea that we can use a bookmark to help save our page."

Evan stated that River Montessori fostered in the children a "reverence for life" including: plants, animals, peoples from other lands and other time periods. According to culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000) CRT teachers "model academic, social, personal, and moral behaviors and values" (p. 46). In accordance, care (Noddings, 1992) purports "our moral attitude toward animals should be a major center of care and

concern,” as well as “children should learn an appreciation for plant life” (p. 55-56).

Evan explained how he understood and approached this reverence for life with his students.

Evan: So, when we look at things like a dead bird we don't just grab it with a plastic bag and throw it in the trash. We get a trowel, we dig a hole, collect some flowers, get some sticks, we recite a few words...

Luke understood and approached nature with a similar reverence for life.

Luke: There are lots of insects that occur in our room. If they are in our path, then we carefully return them to nature. If they are just on a window or a wall then we allow them to be able to carry out their life.

Showing Concern About Social Awareness and Difference

Gay (2000) and Noddings (1992) believed it was not enough for the teacher to know the content of the curriculum teachers must also know their students and the community in order to connect subject matter content knowledge to past, present, and future experiences. Gay's understanding and approach to culturally responsive teaching was more explicit than Noddings. The difference occurred in the level of application to the notion of accurate content knowledge for all students and how, specifically to teach for social justice. Noddings theorized for dialogue in areas of “race, ethnicity, religion, and gender” (p. 120), while Gay theorized for “cultural self-awareness,” “consciousness-raising,” (p. 71) and “dealing with oppression, identity, powerlessness, privilege, culture, and struggle” (p. 142).

Luke and Evan understood and approached concern for social awareness and difference more in accordance with Nodding's notion of awareness and difference than Gay's notion of social justice and consciousness-raising. Aspects of social awareness in Luke and Evan's classroom was the decision to present career choices without a gender stereotype and allowing students the freedom to fully engage in something of their choosing with the people of their choice. Showing concern about social awareness and difference occurred in three (3) ways for the guides in this study, including: (1): not allowing students to claim individual, personal ownership of classroom shared space; (2) encouraging gender-neutral discussions in the classroom; and (3) celebrating difference in the form of a peace march.

Freedom and responsibility was Luke and Evan's understanding and approach to peer interpersonal interactions. Neither lower elementary Montessori classroom required assigned seating. Instead, students were encouraged and allowed the freedom to freely move, ideally with purpose. Evan noticed how no assigned seats empowered the children to work with a variety of different people at various applications of the three-year curriculum. He aligned this noticing with his decision to present key lessons to a variety of children, regardless of year. "So, the presentation, when I give them I don't give them to just boys or just girls. I always mix them up." No assigned seats and guides who modeled working with all children provided the children in the lower elementary classroom with experience working with all others.

Luke and Evan made the decision to present topics that were gender specific in society as gender-neutral in the classroom. They each felt this choice would empower

the child to choose freely, free from what society deemed as normal or acceptable. The nomenclature work (typically in the form of sorting cards with pictures and definitions) never named a gender with a career choice. For example, a fireman was referred to as a fire person. A postman was called a post-person. The children were not given the expectation that certain careers were for men and others for woman.

Every April 20th Luke and Evan's classroom participated in a school-wide peace march. Their decision to participate as a class represented their belief that regardless of who we were in the world, we all deserved the fundamental need for peace. Each shared with me dialogue about the origin of this school-wide practice and how the march was a representation for the children that overcoming difference and coming together peacefully was possible and felt good. The notion of difference, peace, and fairness was evident in the peace march and within the classroom. Although this march would easily be chunked with other essentialized notions of culture—food, festivals, and fun—preparation for the peach march aligned with theorized care and culturally responsive teaching.

Interesting Finding in Regards to Culturally Responsive Teaching

Another interesting finding that emerged from this study was River Montessori's notion of diversity did not include constructs of race, economic status, oppression, or social justice. This aspect of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; 2002) was not present.

It was not present in my dialogue with Jerry, or in my observations, interviews, and stimulated recall sessions with Luke and Evan. Authors suggest there are many challenges to preparing teachers to teach for social justice in traditional teacher education programs (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Sleeter, 2001; McDonald, 2005; Grant, 2006). In accordance with traditional teacher education programs Luke and Evan similarly showed an absence of knowledge and understanding when it came to teaching for social justice. While the school and the two lower elementary Montessori guides in this study did not show evidence that they opposed critical conversations, dialogue, and consciousness-raising about race, economic status, oppression, or social justice it may be, as suggested by Jerry, that River Montessori families might not openly identify with these aspects of diversity, thus these aspects of culturally responsive teaching have not found their way into the lower elementary Montessori classroom. Either way, these issues were absent from the curriculum work in the classrooms I observed during my time at the school.

River Montessori, Luke and Evan discussed diversity as an aspect of human relations. For example, in Luke and Evan's classroom they made decisions supportive of human tendencies. A fundamental human tendency present and applied in both lower elementary Montessori classrooms was the concept of shared human needs. This was an aspect of key lessons in geography and history, as well as the great lessons. Luke and Evan told stories from the perspective of others in the first person. They desired to connect the child to a specific land, time and place. In doing so they presented the child with information about cultures and peoples both in the past and in the present. These guide-to-student discourses included topics like how the environment one lived in

effected what one wore for clothing, what one could grow from the land, and what the person had access to for entertainment and work.

This approach to diversity and culture enhanced the child's awareness of the impact geography had on the life of an individual. Luke and Evan desired for the child to connect to other humans by beginning with the fact that because they were human they had similar needs as them. This dialogue aligned with Gay's (2000) notion of connectedness and the development of community, but it fell short of her notion of social justice and consciousness-raising.

Luke and Evan also invited topics typically held at bay in traditional classrooms into the lower elementary Montessori classroom. I witnessed a discussion about God in Evan's classroom and Luke showcased religious texts for students to access at their will. In both classrooms there were rituals with religious undertones—blessings before lunch and the lighting of candles. In addition, sensitive topics on human reproduction were presented to both lower elementary Montessori classrooms using scientific language and real images.

Clearly, Luke and Evan understood and approached certain aspects of Gay's (2000; 2002) notion of culturally responsive teaching. They encouraged all children to work together cooperatively, they were gender neutral when discussing career choices, and they empowered the child to ask all questions even when those questions were considered taboo. Yet how Luke and Evan operationalized culturally responsive teaching was more aligned with moral education (Noddings, 1992; 2005) than a full instantiation of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; 2002).

Implications of the Findings: Guide Decision-Making

The findings from this study invite further investigation with regard to the preparation and support lower elementary Montessori guides receive during their AMI training. Clearly, this training process, known in the literature as a “transformation of outlook” was deeply entrenched in the decisions they made on a daily basis in their classrooms. Luke and Evan relied heavily upon the knowledge and skills they learned in this training process when preparing the environment, delivering the key lessons, and observing students for emergent sensitive periods and developmental readiness. This alignment between teacher training and teacher decision-making lies in contrast to the existing literature on how traditional teachers make decisions in their classrooms. Preservice teacher education programs may be interested in how lower elementary Montessori guides are trained, since AMI training plays a major role in the guides future decision-making in their own classrooms.

As asserted by Cossentino (2009) Montessori guide training encompassed both the how’s and the why’s of human development and required the Montessori guides attend to the details of learning and teaching. She argued this kind of focus was lacking in mainstream teacher education preparation programs. Teaching and learning within a Montessori lower elementary classroom is self-paced. Every child is looked at as an individual with individual needs and emerging sensitive periods. The lower elementary

guide attends to each child's developing needs by observing the child when interacting with the work, with peers, and with him and the work. Lessons are delivered to individuals and small groups. The guide sits at tables next to the children or on the floor around the rug. The guide never stands in front of the room directing all children engaged in the same activity with the same desired outcome.

If Cossentino (2009) is correct that mainstream teacher education preparation programs do not attend to the details of learning and teaching the question is why? In 1986 in his article *Knowledge Growth in Teaching* Shulman stated, "My colleagues and I refer to the absence of focus on subject matter among the various research paradigms for the study of teaching as the missing paradigm problem" (p. 6). AMI training clearly places a great deal of focus on the key lessons, which are the subject matter content knowledge of the three-year Montessori curriculum. Guides in training are expected to transcribe all of the 2,000 plus key lessons while watching the trainer present the lessons using the didactic materials. Then they are asked to submit the lessons for review, so the trainer can confidently approve that the guide is well-equipped to tell the stories or the key lessons to the 6 to 9 year old child. This transference of knowledge from the trainer to the trainee may just solve the missing paradigm problem with subject matter content knowledge. The mainstream teacher would no longer have to generate lessons plans for submission. All of the lessons of the curriculum would be transcribed and submitted for review before he or she received their certification.

Where the Montessori guide has freedom within the curriculum is how they apply the key lesson to the child's unique needs. They are constantly looking for an

opportunity to invite the child to a lesson based on students' interests, connections, observations, and wonderings. During and following the lesson the guide attends to moments in the lesson where the child was inspired and then provides the child with viable follow-up work related to this aspect of the key lesson. For the lower Montessori guides in this research study the scripted key lesson did not limit the guides' ability to make decisions in relation to the curriculum and the child. The lessons themselves never felt robotic or predictable because the guide had mastered how to change the context of the lesson to fit the unique needs of the child or children at the lesson. Asking mainstream teachers to develop curriculum albums with scripted lessons for the subject matter content knowledge would free the teacher up from having to consistently write lesson plans year after year. Instead, the teacher could refer to the albums as Luke and Evan did in their early years and overtime fully commit them to memory allowing them access to any key lesson at the appropriate time based on the child's readiness. The mainstream teacher could then focus his or her efforts on the child, not on fulfilling the expectation of planning and preparing materials and activities to teach. These would already be developed and available upon graduation.

Implications of the Findings: Care and Culturally Responsive Decision-Making

How Luke and Evan understood and approached care and culturally responsive teaching in their decision-making was more aligned with Noddings (1992; 2005) notion of moral

education, than Gay's (2000; 2002) notion of culturally responsive teaching. The dialogue about diversity, in general, at River Montessori lent itself to issues of religion, gender, special needs of children, and a generalized acceptance of cognitive diversity. While, River Montessori clearly recognized various aspects of diversity in the context of the presumed needs of the families enrolled at their school how they understood and approached diversity fell short of Gay's (2000; 2002) notion of consciousness-raising and stance that CRT needs to deal with oppression, identity, powerlessness, privilege, culture, and struggle.

Luke and Evan exhibited an understanding and approach to both care and culturally responsive teaching aligned with many aspects of both theories. Where they departed was in their understanding and approach to social justice and the critical co-creation of knowledge from cultural texts specifically chosen to showcase voices typically marginalized in society.

Montessori educators may be open to implementing a deeper understanding of culturally responsive teaching and practices aligned with social justice. Teaching for social justice is an area for further study within the lower elementary Montessori classroom.

Limitations of this Study

Several limitations were present in the design of this qualitative case study, including my personal knowledge of Montessori education and experience as a lower elementary Montessori guide. Collecting data in two lower elementary Montessori classrooms did not provide a comprehensive view of what happens in general in lower elementary Montessori classrooms outside of this school. In this way, the findings from this study should not be viewed as generalizable to other Montessori school spaces outside of River Montessori. Additionally, the number of times I was able to observe, interview, and perform stimulated recall sessions was dependent upon my personal availability aligning with participants' availability. I am sure that additional data was not captured due to these scheduling constraints.

Additional Research

Notwithstanding the limitations of the study, the findings of this qualitative case study of two lower elementary Montessori guides suggest there are opportunities for additional research with regards to teacher decision-making and care and culturally responsive teaching. AMI training heavily influenced Luke and Evan's decision-making. This finding stands in some contrast to the literature on traditional teacher education programs. Additional research should be conducted in the context of AMI training. What are the core principles that operate in the decision-making of AMI trainers? Do the AMI trainers

follow a specific model for teaching the Montessori method? These findings might provide interesting insights about the strength that teacher training can have on practicing teachers' work in the classroom, including those in traditional teaching contexts.

With regards to care and culturally responsive teaching the study indicated that Luke and Evan understood aspects of care and culturally responsive teaching because elements of care and culturally responsive teaching were present in their decision-making and in their pedagogical strategies and approaches. What is less clear is if the Montessori curriculum and key lessons discuss current understandings and notions of social justice. Future research should analyze the lower elementary Montessori key lessons for discourse and dialogue about race, oppression, economic status, and struggle, particularly in the context of key lessons in geography, history, and the great lessons.

Appendix A: School Information

School Name	River Montessori
Participants	Jerry, Deb, Evan, and Luke
Setting	Urban
Total Enrollment	333 in 2011-2012
Lower Elementary Classroom	Approximately 29 children
School type	Private, Non Profit
Children Served	Ages 18 months to 15 years
School Opened	1967
Administrative & Support Staff	23
Guides	12
Assistants	12

Appendix B: Overview of Methods

Method	Time and Frequency	Area of Focus	Method for Recording
Interview 1 (Guides)	First two months	Teacher decision-making Montessori education: pedagogy, AMI certification, albums, lessons, philosophy Teacher beliefs, values, experiences, influences	Audio-tape
Interview 2 (Guides)	Second two months	Teacher decision-making Care Cultural responsiveness Montessori elementary education	Audio-tape
Interview 1 (Administrator)	First two months	Background information on the school, its philosophy, its mission, its goals, its relationships with students, parents, the community, etc.	Audio-tape
Interview 2 (Administrator)	Second two months	Is care addressed at this school? How?	Audio-tape

		In what ways? Is diversity addressed at the school? How? In what ways?	
Interview 1 (Founder)	One time event	Collected Deb's story, the back story for River Montessori school, and background knowledge about her book <i>Children Who Are Not Yet Peaceful</i> , as well as asked Deb about diversity's place in a Montessori school	Handwritten field notes jotted down the day after the interview (Deb's lawyer's approved the document the day after our interview)
Observations 10 total (Guides only)	Weekly	Enactment of classroom curriculum/practice	Handwritten field notes
Stimulated Recall 5 formal sessions, 6 informal session (Guides only)	5 formal sessions took place in the first and second half of the study; informal sessions took place during lunch and after school on some of my observation days	Process for curriculum decision-making	Audio tape
Collection of school, teacher, and classroom documents	As needed	Process for school decision-making Process for teacher decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community handbook - Staff handbook - Mediation Cards - List of resources available to parents - Weekly newsletters - Articles given to my by Jerry, the Elementary

			Coordinator - Resources given to me by lower elementary guides
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Appendix C: Guide Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Research Questions and Constructs	Teacher Interview Questions
<p>1) What defining characteristics operate in the decision-making of teachers in the Montessori lower elementary classroom?</p> <p>Teacher decision-making</p> <p>Montessori education: pedagogy, AMI certification, albums, lessons, philosophy</p> <p>Teacher beliefs, values, experiences, influences</p>	<p>Interview 1: Luke (46:21)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Tell me about your history as a Montessorian. What got you interested in this type of pedagogy? 2) So, was your college experience associated with education at all? 3) So, let's talk a little about that three summer training program. I know you mentioned to me that the albums are composed over time and that you are given time to write down, more formally, the lessons and also depict them and you send them off to the trainer and there is also a reader involved. Talk to me about this composition of albums. Was this something that you felt was important as a learner in learning this new pedagogy, this new Montessori philosophy? 4) Which would you like to share with me today? Which two albums? 5) You mentioned this great lesson. What are the great lessons all about? 6) It seems like the great lessons may have a lot of resources behind them, since it is something that is historical. Do you recall any specific resources in your program that helped? 7) When you are unveiling the chart and talking about the history of species, are there specific questions that you raise with students or a specific flow that you are starting with and taking them to? I know you mentioned a lot of wonderings and the opportunity for students to connect and question. Talk to me about the kind of language you use around this chart. 8) Now this story, does it happen at the beginning of the school year? Is it directed toward a small group of students or the whole class? 9) And that is called the coming of life. And then the second album you wanted to share is geometry, so a different perspective.

	<p>10) Are you familiar with the idea that Montessori lessons are given in three periods? They are called the three period lessons. Tell me about your connection to that phrase or that concept?</p> <p>11) We talked a bit earlier, after an observation about how you choose the context to extend for that third portion of the period. How you choose to talk about muffins or crystals in relationship to math or in this case how you choose to use the community, both inside and out to find angles. Talk to me in about those decisions in your teaching? Why you make them?</p> <p>12) And my last question today is just really wondering if there's anything else that you wanted to tell me about your beliefs or your values and other influences that influence who you are as a teacher?</p> <p>13) Do you find that having been a Montessori student, yourself, influences your practice?</p> <p>14) I am not sure if it was you or E that said to me the hardest thing, or the greatest challenge, is not giving them the answer. So it sounds like as your presenting the lessons you are stating the concepts but you are also hoping to allow a lot of wonderment?</p>
<p>2) What defining characteristics operate in the decision-making of teachers in the Montessori lower elementary classroom?</p> <p>Teacher decision-making</p> <p>Montessori education: pedagogy, AMI certification, albums, lessons, philosophy</p> <p>Teacher beliefs, values, experiences, influences</p>	<p>Interview 1: Evan (Answered via email due to illness)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell me about your history as a Montessorian. What got you interested in this type of pedagogy or teaching philosophy and practice? 2. Was your college experience associated with education? 3. Which two albums would you like to share with me today? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Which two lessons would you like to speak to; one lesson per album? b. Please name each album and discuss in detail the lesson of choice from each album. You are welcome to scan the page within the albums and attach them. c. Please write how you would teach these two lessons to a group of children or an individual child. How would you introduce the concept? How would you interact with

	<p>the materials? How would you let children experience the materials and the concepts? What types of follow-up activities would you propose children attempt?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. When you teach these lessons are there specific questions that you raise with students or a specific flow that you are starting with and taking them to (a lesson plan, so to speak)? How you will begin, provide experiences, and conclude the lesson? 5. Are you familiar with the idea that Montessori lessons are given in three periods? They are called the 3-Period Lesson. Tell me about your connection to that phrase or that concept? 6. How do you choose the contexts for the possible follow-up activities? For instance, after you gave a lesson on equivalent fractions you encouraged students to do several follow activities including taking a right angle measure and finding items in the classroom with right angles. How did you come to choose this experience?
<p>3) ow is care and cultural responsiveness understood and approached in the decision-making of teachers in the Montessori lower elementary classroom?</p> <p>Teacher decision-making</p> <p>Care</p> <p>Cultural responsiveness</p> <p>Montessori elementary education</p>	<p>Interview 2: Luke (52:26)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) We are going to begin our conversation about the concept of normalization and J’s approach when guiding students who are not yet normalized. 2) Talk to me in the context of grace and courtesy about the process that children use to approach you when they have a question and you are engaged in a lesson? 3) All right. I noticed today when the students were organizing the science experiment and beginning it that there were several on-lookers. Talk to me about that process because I know in the literature and that Montessori’s words, that she encouraged the observation of others work. How does that work in this environment? How did you make it happen, create that system for the on-looker? 4) So it sounds like there is a lot of opportunity in the science experiments as well as with all the materials to model care for the materials and also care for self and care for others? Is there anything else you want to share about how that takes place in the

	<p>environment? How you set the pace and how you model and practice um care for self, others, materials, ideas, nature, all of those different things.</p> <p>5) And I noticed that there is a sign up sheet I believe to go outside and um there is a process behind from indoor to out and that today when you moved from indoor to outdoor, the students did not change their behavior or their focus, even though I was the main adult in the space. And just talk to me about that movement and that opportunity. Do they write that note?</p> <p>6) My next question is about conflict resolution. I was able to watch an elaborate facilitation that you gave to a group of students after there was a situation that arose outside. Um, and your language and your approach and it was very thorough and everyone seemed to be heard and very pleased at the end of the conversation. And um, talk to me about the decisions that you made when you were sitting with that group and facilitating how everyone told their story.</p> <p>7) And I noticed that there are mediation booklets that you all have, as well and I was able to get those from ah John and I told him you know that your language, as I was looking at it, I had experienced you utilizing this approach and he was excited. To have the experience seeing because he said it is something that you all are working hard to prepare?</p> <p>8) So, my last question uh deals with where you feel the Montessori materials or the language in a Montessori classroom has the opportunity to approach concepts like difference, and diversity, and gender, and religion, and race um all of those sensitive topics in our world. I noticed that the students do have a routine before lunch that might play into that where they say kind of a blessing out of a book that has hearts on it. Or it says grace?</p>
<p>4) How is care and cultural responsiveness understood and approached in the decision-making of</p>	<p>Interview 2: Evan (50:57)</p> <p>1) The first question I have for you is about normalization. (Evan asked for clarification.) I guess that when I think about normalized I have</p>

<p>teachers in the Montessori lower elementary classroom?</p> <p>Teacher decision-making</p> <p>Care</p> <p>Cultural responsiveness</p> <p>Montessori elementary education</p>	<p>actually read Goertz's book, <i>Children Who Are Not Yet Peaceful</i>, and also reading some original works of Montessori, she talks about the normalized child as a child that can concentrate and it is also been spoken to as a child that is able to reach flow experiences, so the deeper thinking and um uninterrupted thinking and problem solving. So, I am thinking in the context of both work, being able to choose work and to start and finish work, and also in the context of concentration and problem solving. But, I would also love to hear how you consider the term too, cause I know that there are lots of concepts that kind of fly around.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) I had the opportunity to be given the mediation booklets that Jerry was creating for the elementary level and he was talking about the school creating a specific kind of process and language for students to talk when something happens, when some is unsettled or needs comfort, or to overcome what ever may come into this space. Talk to me about the way that this school and the way that you handle, kind of extreme situations. Maybe there are multiple students involved or um you have to address the same issue multiple times. Talk to me about that. 3) Talk to me about what care means to you in your classroom. How you think about it with your students? How you model and how you provide opportunities for students to be the carer and the cared for? 4) I noticed at the end of the day there is a process where it might be job time. Talk to me about the design of that process in your classroom. 5) I know there is also a great deal of care for the body at lunchtime. That there are specific nutritional requirements that the students follow when they pack their lunches. Talk to me about the reasoning behind that. 6) My next question really deals with how you think about and use what experiences you know children have had at home, or in their cultures as a tool in the classroom? Thinking about those follow-up experiences or thinking about maybe how you will question those students or thinking about a context you might choose to use. I know the loquats have
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	<p>been a great one because there are trees around the campus and you know they have had experiences with them um, but talk to me about how you think about those out of school experiences and what you know of about their culture and how you use it.</p> <p>7) Now this questioning and wondering around their experiences, and what you notice, is this apart of the training or talk to me about how you came about with this process. How you made this approach?</p> <p>8) I was just wondering how that came to be a part of your repertoire? But, I can see that it really becomes a part of you. I guess the last question I have for you is when you are teaching your lessons or are their lessons in particular that foster opportunities to talk about more sensitive concepts, like difference or diversity, or religion, or gender, or race? I know Joseph shared with me the coming of life stories and those are definitely opportunities for sensitive conversations um just happy to hear of any that you think of that kind of create an opportunity for those types of dialogue?</p> <p>9) I guess my last question is something that I have noticed in the classroom and this couples with my other last question, this is my second last question (laughs), is that I have noticed that the students pair off in their working partners and that they are open to working with anyone, regardless of gender, regardless of age, talk to me about how you support that and encourage and create and foster the willingness to work so freely and openly with everyone?</p>
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<p>3) Follow-up questions:</p> <p>Follow-up questions</p> <p>Opportunity to member check</p>	<p>Follow-up questions took place during lunch and after school on half and full day observation days with Luke and Evan.</p> <p>All participants in the study (aside from Deb) were given all transcribed interviews, stimulated recall sessions, and copies of my handwritten field notes for member checking purposes. Within each folder I placed a note asking each participant to read over their documents and contact me via phone or email if they wanted to change anything or add any information for clarification purposes. I received no phone calls or emails regarding the data collected at River Montessori.</p>
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Appendix D: Administrator Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Research Questions and Constructs	Administrator Interviews
<p>1) What defining characteristics operate in the decision-making of teachers in the Montessori lower elementary classroom?</p> <p>Teacher decision-making</p> <p>Montessori education: pedagogy, AMI certification, albums, lessons, philosophy</p> <p>Teacher beliefs, values, experiences, influences</p>	<p>Interview 1: Jerry (Elementary Coordinator) (1:28:24)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Would you like to begin by just giving me some background information about the school, about the mission statements and goals or how you approach informing other's about what the practice is like here at AMS? 2) Jerry's questions to me. Would you like for me to talk at all about training? My response, "Absolutely." 3) If you would tell me um tell me about when people come to AMS and they are interested in learning more about how you cultivate the child in this environment? What kind of information do you share with them? 4) Would you say that AMS is driven to have continuity? Continuity (meaning) your goal is to support the child to stay in this environment? 5) Talk a little bit about how you support your teachers? We have talked about different opportunities they have with partnerships that you are making with the community and also with research, the research community, a larger research community um I know it's probably very extensive, but ah just a short version of how you support your teachers? 6) I thing I would like to talk to you about is diversity and how culture is kind of approached at AMS either through the guide, through the support systems in place for the guide, or through the Montessori materials themselves?
<p>2) How is care and cultural responsiveness understood and</p>	<p>Interview 2: Jerry (1:04:57)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) I wanted to begin our conversation today I had

<p>approached in the decision-making of teachers in the Montessori lower elementary classroom?</p> <p>Teacher decision-making</p> <p>Care</p> <p>Cultural responsiveness</p> <p>Montessori elementary education</p>	<p>the opportunity to be apart of a secondary talk that discusses what happens next when River Montessori students go into go into a high school setting or go into a college setting and the first observation that I took when I walked in the room where that there was the opportunity to pour a glass of wine and have a healthful snack and also there were many male figures present for this talk and I am just asking him how he planned and prepared this environment for the talk?</p> <p>2) Something else that was very interesting that emerged in the conversation was the, what was the gentleman's name that spoke with you? When he was talking about the adolescent curriculum and it was in this pinwheel and he was saying how the master and fulfill those obligations they kind of fill in the pinwheel and there was this speculation from a parent about how they knew that the child had mastered or that the student had mastered that kind of knowledge and um there was talk of them being about to teach it. Give me a little bit of background about that mastery and it doesn't have to necessarily be about the adolescent community, you can also touch on the lower el. What kinds of cues do you look for or does the guide look for?</p> <p>3) The last thing that I noticed in the talk that you gave about the adolescent community where you showed the video of the students, wow, to me, my impression of those students was how powerful their identity was. Their sense of self seemed to be so stable for high schoolers or for recent graduates going into college. It really blew me away to see that kind of identity formation, at that level, that sense of self? What are you thoughts about that?</p> <p>4) That kind of leads us right into some questions, as I was going through the handbook, um a couple of questions came up that I wanted to ask you and the first one was about this idea of the child's authentic nature? Just kind of wanted you to elaborate? What does that mean to AMS, the child's authentic nature and I can</p>
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	<p>look back in the, I think it's, it might be in the second section of the intro in the handbook just talking about um how you approach the child.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">5) Another thing that emerged as I was going through the handbook and just having had the grand opportunity to be an observer in the classrooms is that there are definitely some core principles behind the flow of the day and that you all support in terms of maybe your main tenets of a school in addition to other people have their idea is what Montessori's main tenets are. I am just wondering what are the core principles or main tenets that this school functions behind, kind of grounded this school in its daily flow?6) I guess what I am thinking about is um a lot of people have read many of Maria's works and I am thinking about Lillard and I think it was Paula Polk because it was written in the 70s and Angelina is her daughter or niece, related, I believe in some way. Laughs. I am probably wrong with the direct connection, but um she came up or decided upon six main tenets of Montessori and they were freedom and responsibility, structure and order, beauty and atmosphere, nature is in there, the Didactic materials, um the development of community. I think that was six? I hope and I am just wondering if you respond to those, make a connection to them, or if you expand upon them in any way?7) Talk to me about imagination because I know that is something I struggle to find in the literature about Montessori.8) Something I find very interesting about the lower el in particular is this idea that the lesson itself is broad in scope but the concept that the didactic materials delivers is limited allowing them to have those going out experiences be it into an encyclopedia or into the garden or into the greater community um that kind of leads me to the question of what types of resources do you choose to have available for exploration in the lower el classroom?9) I know that there is a rather lengthy resource
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	<p>for parents that y'all have as well that states different books that I believe support the school's philosophy or have a connection to the experience that you want the parents to have an understanding of?</p> <p>10) I know that you also make decisions about resources that you want to present to your guides and that you meet with them and have conversations about them?</p> <p>11) I know that there is so much that comes out every year, are there specific universities or specific researchers that you look to for works? Or how do you learn of what's out there um in that vast world?</p> <p>12) Just kind of talk to me about how you think that happened or came about or how you became such a voice in the larger context of Montessori?</p>
<p>3) Follow-up questions</p> <p>Follow-up questions</p> <p>Opportunity to member check</p>	<p>Jerry was given a hanging file folder with copies of all of his transcribed interviews with me. Jerry was given the opportunity to look over his voice and contact me with any corrections or add-ons.</p>

Appendix E: Guide Formal Stimulated Recall Sessions

<p>Stimulated Recall Session 1: Luke (38:44)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) So, I mentioned to Luke an observation I took of a lesson that involved a very delicate, beautiful flower that showcased not only the potential for discussion of adjectives, but also the potential for discussion about botany and I was wondering how this flower came to be and kind of probing your thinking about how you chose to question and facilitate, and model in this lesson? 2) It looks like in the arrangement of the writing tools that every student had a space to place their pencil, to have it rest, as well as a colored laminated mat and the paper I believe it wasn't just random paper. It looked to be a specific size. Talk to me about these materials that the kids just seem to use and accept and know when to use them in different situations. 3) I have a favorite question in here that you asked that I thought was really clever. You mentioned to the students what they would ask the flower if they were able to communicate with the flower. Talk to me about how you generated that type of question. I think that that is a very unique approach. 4) The next lesson I wanted to talk to you about was the science lesson that I have seen take place and ah the students were gathering the materials themselves and I noticed that you chose to kind of stand to the side and not really manipulate the materials yourself, but ask the scientists questions about whether they were prepared and whether the things were in the proper place. Talk to me about that decision. I know that they have seen you perform this experiment and that they had, through that visceral experience been able to see you, how you do it. But, as a teacher it can be extremely challenging to remove yourself from preparing an experiment. Talk to me about how you are feeling and what you are doing as you stand aside and watch these young guys kind of gather and organize. 5) And I noticed you let them struggle with striking the match. That one of the two gentlemen it took several attempts, maybe upwards of ten different tries and I also noticed the language that you used was very supportive. It was can I offer you a suggestion? Talk to me about that choice of language when you notice that they may need a little support um how you go about offering it? 6) Throughout the morning I noticed there was a younger female student, I believe was working on place value work and she
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	<p>kept coming to you with her work and you would direct um her attention to different things that you noticed about her work about how she changed different categories but she didn't change others or probing her about something that she thought she knew or she knew? And she kept kind of going back and making adjustments to the work and I believe the exchange ended with you asking her if that's what she knows right now? So it seemed like she was working on a new work of place value and that she wasn't she hadn't mastered that skill yet, but your language was very supportive and allowed her to have multiple opportunities to revisit the process? Talk to me about that kind of language that you use with this female student and her place value work?</p> <p>7) Is that something that is spoken to in your training process? How to respond to those types of I like or do you like questions that children do come to you with?</p> <p>8) Another lesson that was interesting to see was I believe it was a group of older students and you went to the closet and you retrieved a box labeled SRA reading laboratory? And you pulled out the work and allowed the students to kind of investigate the box and you approached them by saying up will you look at this SRA? I can't figure out what it stands for. And just talk to me about this tool. Um I have my ideas of its use but I'm just curious about it.</p> <p>9) Is the Stanford Binet a timed test?</p> <p>10) Do you notice any change in the students on the days they're working on this test in terms of anxiety or anything that's visible that they communicate with you?</p> <p>11) And the last work that I wanted to talk with you about, I believe it was a sentence work. They had, they were doing I believe complex sentences and there were several different tools involved of various colors that represented the nouns and the verbs and I believe you were guiding the students to find sentences in the literature and they were kind of using those um and creating complex sentences. Talk to me about this work, that sentence work, something that's unique to Montessori.</p> <p>12) And the last thing that I wanted to talk with you about is the collection of the caterpillars and how they came to be. I know one of the days I was here it was very new, so there was a lot of gathering around it throughout the day and you would impromptu kind of stop by and make a noticing or ask a question and I saw a resource or two on the table for them to explore, to look at and try to find in the resource. Just talk to me about how they came to come into the classroom and its</p>
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	<p>appeal I guess.</p> <p>13) Is there any interest in the concept of life cycles?</p>
<p>Stimulated Recall Session 2: Luke (52:27)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) I am here with Luke today and we are going to have our second stimulated recall session and I was able to put together a short list of questions and send it off to him for this session. It's also here and present with us and I am going to let Luke choose which question he'd like to begin with. 2) How would you describe the teacher-student relationships in your classroom? Student – student relationships? And relationships with the greater community, parents, guests, etc.? 3) Yeah, I'm just thinking even outside of the academics, outside of the overarching progression of the child, just how you think of the kids? So, even removing it from the immediate environment, thinking about how they play into your psyche and moments through out the day even outside of school too. 4) That kind of ties in with that, I think it's the one below it about ah, um if there's opportunities for ideas and collaborating with the community. I know that E mentioned to me a project with, around Christmas time, or in the wintertime, about scarves? About how kids sewed scarves? They weren't the ones, who passed them into the community, but they prepared them and I was just wondering if there's other type of collaborations? 5) Are there many outings that happen at the elementary level, the lower el level? 6) Talk to me about the second plane of development, the intellectual plane, how do you create experiences that allow student to practice the skills and the competencies of the second plane, justice, morality, etc.? 7) Are you familiar with the six main tenets of Montessori (Lillard, 1972)? Tell me what you know of the tenets and the decisions you are faced with to uphold these expectations; freedom with responsibility, structure and order, reality and nature, beauty and atmosphere, the Montessori materials, development of community. And so are those the 6 tenets that she identified? And I just I don't know if that is something you all know about, care about make a connection to, um but I'm just curious if it is something you have heard? 8) Do you find it to be a challenge with the imagination of a child to maintain that separation from fantasy? Cause I know that in Montessori itself it functions in reality from what I understand. 9) I know that you speak about fairy tales and myths and there

	<p>are opportunities for the imagination to play in. I was here one of the days you were reading a Chinese myth and just listening to some of the conversations that occurred afterward you could see their imaginations coming alive. But I know there is all of this talk about um the separation of fantasy and Montessori. Touch on that.</p> <p>10) That reference that you are looking through who is it authored by? Can I ask you something? Is this? Whose words are these? So a lot of this information come from the training?</p> <p>11) I wanted to kind of get things that are out there that I've stumbled upon and whether it means something to you in your world?</p> <p>12) And the last really big concept is kind of thrown out their all the time with Montessori either correctly, incorrectly, justly, or unjustly that concept of following the child. I'm just wondering how it feels to you and how you interpret that?</p> <p>13) I think one of the biggest critiques that's out there about Montessori is that, the concept of follow the child is missing accountability.</p>
<p>Stimulated Recall Session 1: Evan (40:48)</p>	<p>1) I am here with E and we are sitting down today to have a stimulated recall session about different lessons he has given on days that I've been able to observe and the first lesson or the first observation that I am asking him questions about happened the morning of the peace march. He asked the children if he could read a text called Somewhere Today and I'm just curious about where this text came from, how he came to know of it, and why he chose to pare it with this particular day?</p> <p>2) I witnessed an event where there was a moth on the floor in the classroom that morning of the peace march and I noticed that a student carefully scooped it up and placed it in his open hand and walked cautiously to the door to put it back into the environment outside. Talk to me about this process about the, how Montessori approaches nature and wild life?</p> <p>3) I just noticed how much care went into the transference of the moth and you could see that he wanted to be as gentle as possible. I know you mentioned on the day of the peace march that you're really there to allow them to be creative and take on the day in whatever form they wish and I noticed that you saw an opportunity to invite a child to come over and talk to you about different types of angles and um you began by saying may I show you something and asking the child to come with you and view different types of angles, right angles, obtuse angles, acute angles, talk to me about this</p>

	<p>approach of inviting a child to a lesson and how and what you are thinking when you're showing them an experience with the materials?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">4) One of the things that I have noticed in your classroom is that you yourself are a musician and the mandolin is kind of a staple in the classroom and it's part of the process of both celebration and preparation for lunch. Talk to me about this presence of music. I definitely see the interest of music in the classroom and see how the students join you, next to you, arms around one another, with song sheets in hand or just from memory singing along and even at times grabbing other instruments that are available in the classroom and providing the drums beats and things. Talk to me about this presence of music and how it plays a part in your classroom.5) They seem to really enjoy the game where you play a little ditty and you ask them the title of the song, I believe, and that's how you select who will be the first person to choose the table and the friends to join them for lunch?6) One of the other noticings I've made as your commenting about student work is that you carefully choose the type of language you use to notice their work. For instance, one of the students in the day of the peace march had created a sign with the cardboard and she approached you with her sign and her sign had the cut-out of the bird and the words free peace and love on the sign and you began the interchange with the student by saying "Can I tell you what I really enjoy about this?" Talk to me about this process. How you are making the decision to comment on students work ah that can be a very challenging thing for teachers to choose what kind of language to use?7) Is that something that was learned behavior from training or something from the school itself or talk to me about the influence for using that approach?8) I noticed that early in the morning one student, a gentlemen student brought in a loquat pie and midway through the day there was conversation about how many slices needed to be made on this pie and um you were supporting the students with questions and statements like let's get some paper and figure it out and inviting the students to really take charge of deciding how to slice the pie. Talk to me about this dialogue ah with the students around this pie.9) Let's see if I have a couple of specific questions about two more formal lessons I observed on a day outside of the peace march. The first lesson was about, I believe it was about adjectives. You had three students with you and you invited
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	<p>them to get the noun symbol and an adjective symbol and I think that the context was loquats. Was your chosen noun that you began with actually and you were using words like yummy, delicious and then asking questions. What word described? Yummy described. Delicious described and you had these different strips of paper or different maybe it was um a formal material? Blue strips and black strips and you were creating different piles and asking each child to tell you when to stop. Talk to me about this lesson and how you deliver this lesson? If there is a particular starting point or a particular vocabulary that you focus on and how you move from the beginning, middle, and end?</p> <p>10) And the last work I wanted to talk with you today about was this work that in my mind I connected to problems that might be on a standardized SAT and it had to do with the train. And I initially got a little nervous for the gentlemen with this problem and I noticed that there was a lot of material that went with it. You had a lot of the math material with the thousands cubes and the hundreds blocks and the ten bars and the questions themselves and you were working with the students on how to make sense of the question and figure out what it was asking and it had to do with time, velocity, and distance. And you opened up the lesson by asking questions about what they knew about how we measure time, and how we measure distance, and how we measure velocity. Talk to me about this work it seemed, I thought, in my opinion this is very challenging work and they seem to take it on and really stick with it. Talk to me about this lesson.</p> <p>11) So I noticed that you find opportunities and these teachable moments, in your language. Talk to me about how you make those decisions on the fly? How you just see and know what to say? You seem to be able to connect a part of the material with an action that happens in the classroom.</p>
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Glossary

Montessori education: The philosophy of teaching named after its founder Dr. Maria Montessori. According to Montessori, “The Montessori method is scientific education. Knowledge of childhood is its foundation. It is built on the discovered laws of the development of the body and mind of the child” (1960/1966, p. 1)

Prepared environment: This is the term used to describe the Montessori classroom. It is a planned space with simple beauty and didactic materials arranged sequentially from more concrete to more abstract work.

Montessori guide: A Montessori teacher is referred to as a guide. The guide is trained to first observe the child, and then to follow the child based on his or her developmental readiness.

Didactic materials: These are the hands on implements that make-up the Montessori work or the Montessori curriculum in the lower elementary classroom. These are the tools the children use independently after they are given an initial lesson by the guide or a child who has mastered this work.

Following the child: Montessori children are granted freedom with responsibility. The children move about the classroom with purpose selecting work in relation to their personal sensitive periods. The environment is designed to remove known obstacles allowing the child to be independent.

Control charts: Some of the Montessori didactic materials have premade, wooden control charts the children can use to compare their answers to. A control chart has the answers to specific problems but not the work showing how the answer was arrived at.

Mastery: The term used by the guide indicating the child has adequate knowledge of a concept or work and is ready to move on to the next work in the series.

Pinwheel: This is a graphic organizer used by River Montessori guides. It has the three-year curriculum areas segmented, so the child and guide can shade in areas mastered and focus on areas that are not shaded and have yet to be mastered.

Key lesson: A key lesson is a lesson told in a story format. The lesson itself uses simple language to reveal key facts about the topic of interest, but it never tells the child every detail. The key lesson intentionally limits the knowledge shared allowing students the opportunity to research and discovery on their own.

Normalization: When a child is normalized he has learned how to choose work that is developmentally appropriate and is the result of his unique, timely sensitive period. The child can fulfill his need to work.

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Vita

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