

Racial Identity Development and the Early Childhood Educator's Role

Toni Sturdivant, Ph.D.
Teacher & Educational Consultant

Who am I

- Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching from UTSA
 - Cognate: Early Childhood Education
 - Dissertation Title: Developing While Black: An Examination of Racial Discourse found in the Play of Black Preschoolers
 - MA in Early Childhood and Elementary Education, specializing in Child Development
- Educator
 - Pre-K Teacher SAISD & HEBISD
 - Master Teacher for Pre-K 4 SA
 - University Instructor (UTSA, UTA, TWU, TCCD)
- Researcher
 - Scholar-Activist
- Mother



Participants will gain information...

- about the understandings, realizations, and attitudes of young children as it relates to race, empowering them to counter hegemonic messaging that is being internalized.
- helpful in combating the idea of the necessity of color-blind messaging with young children.
- for further justification for anti-bias (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards) work with young children.



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Poll 1

The Context

Racial Awareness: 3 months (Kelly et al., 2005; Quinn et al., 2016)

Racial Classification: 6 months (Winkler, 2009)

Developmental Timeline

Display Racial Preferences in preschool (Earick, 2010; MacNevin & Berman, 2017; Park, 2011; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001).

Solid Racial Views: 8 years (Hindley & Olsen Edwards, 2017)

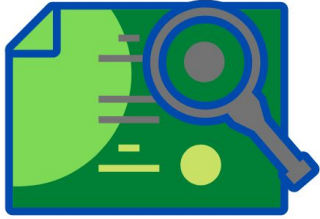


Racist society
(Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Realities of Society

White supremacist Curriculums
(Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995)
“Color-Blind” Teaching Practices
(Derman-Sparks & Olsen)

Research Questions



- ✓ How do Black preschool girls engage in play with racially diverse dolls?
- ✓ What racial discourse are present in the play of Black preschool girls?



Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Feminism (CRF)

- Gender oppression under patriarchy AND Racial oppression under White supremacist systems (Wing, 2003)
- The appearance of Black women (girls) (Caldwell, 2003)

Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST)

- Posits that external factors and an individual's perspectives lead to identity formation.

(Spencer, 2006)

What do we know?

- **Play** serves a primary means of development for young children (Frost, et al, 2012), provides insight in their development (Vygotsky, 1978).
- **Pro-White bias** found in young children (Clark & Clark, 1939; MacNaughton, Davis, and Smith, 2010), including in gendered messaging (Earick, 2010)
- **Racial socialization** practices positively correlated with positive racial identity development (Bennett, 2006; Demo & Hughes, 1990; Hughes, 2003; Seaton et al., 2012).
- **Educators and Schooling** can contribute to racial identity development (Lynn & Parker, 2006; Staiger, 2005; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001).
 - Curriculum (Dumas, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Leonardo, 2009)
 - CRP (Brown-Jeffrey and Cooper, 2011)





Room to learn more

- **Forced choice methodology**
 - (Clark & Clark, 1939a, 1939b; Margaret B. Spencer & Horowitz, 1973)
- **Black-White dichotomy**
 - (Clark & Clark, 1939a; Jarrett, 2016; Spencer & Horowitz, 1973)
- **Unnatural, stressful environment**
 - (Jordan and Hernandez-Reif, 2009)
- **Qualitative naturalized observations which had**
 - A **different focus** (MacNevin & Berman, 2017)
 - **Broad** exploration (Van Ausdale and Feagin, 2001)



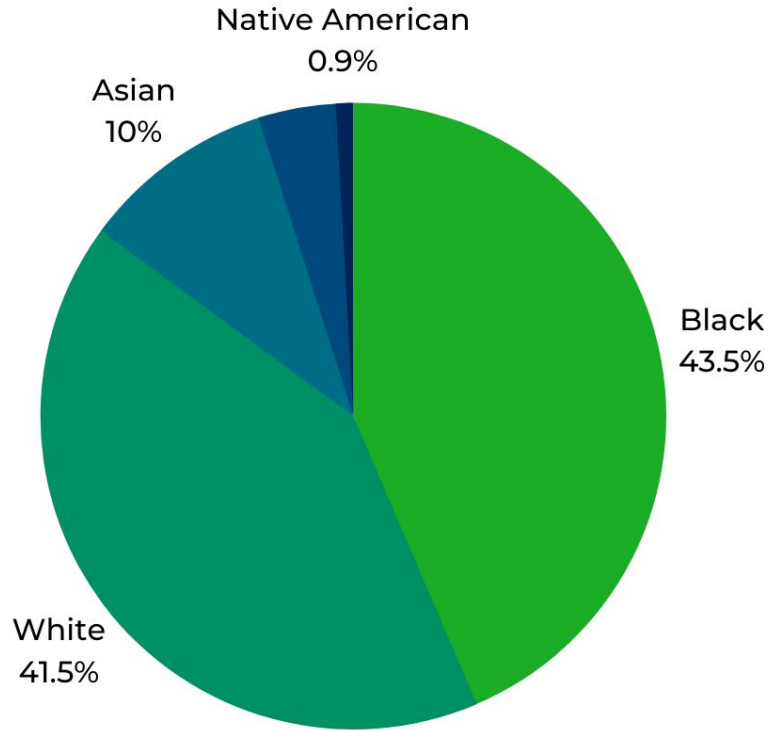


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The Present Study

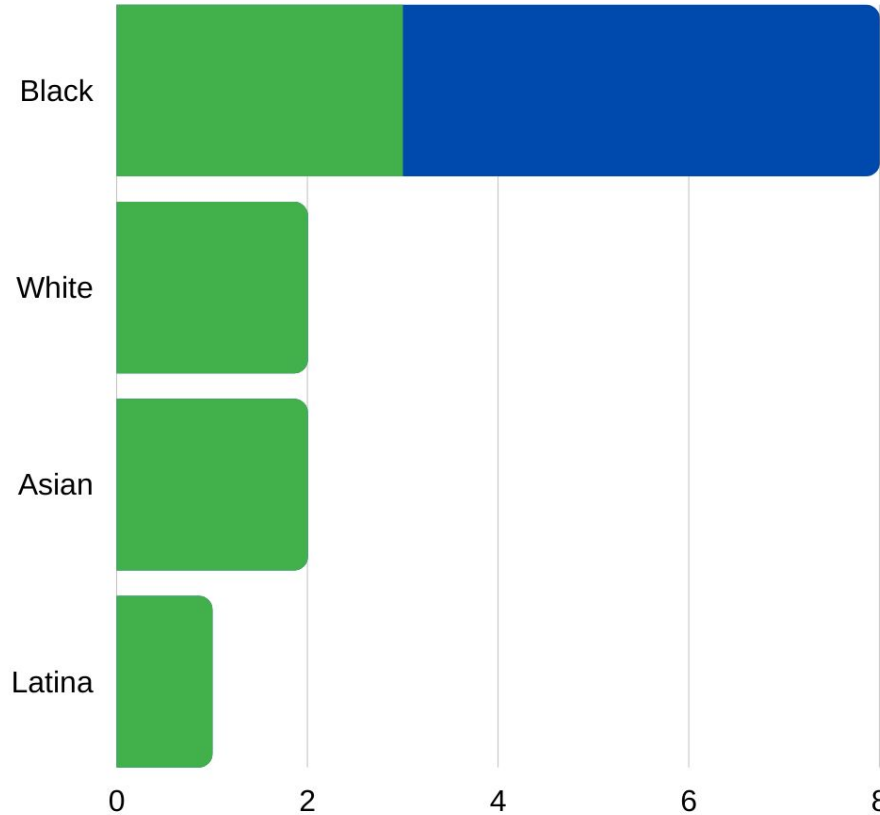
RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Fairview CDC (Pseudonym)



RACIAL AND GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS

of the Pre-K 4 Classroom



The Teachers

- Middle-aged Black women
 - Mid-tone, curly-kinky hair
- One with CDA and college credits
- One with BS of Education
- 13 years combined experience



The Participants

Amber

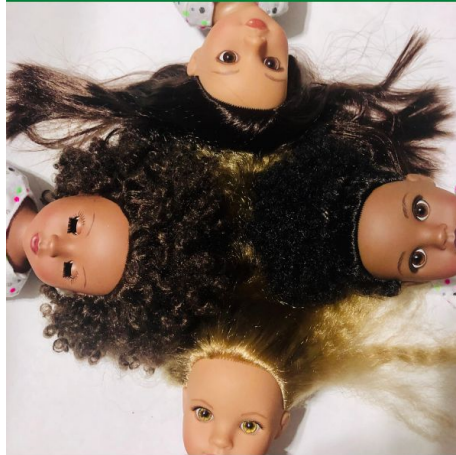
- Medium deep skin tone
- Kinky afro hair, usually worn in an afro puff
- Mostly soft-spoken
- Daughter of single, college educated mother
- Commuted to school for “better opportunity”



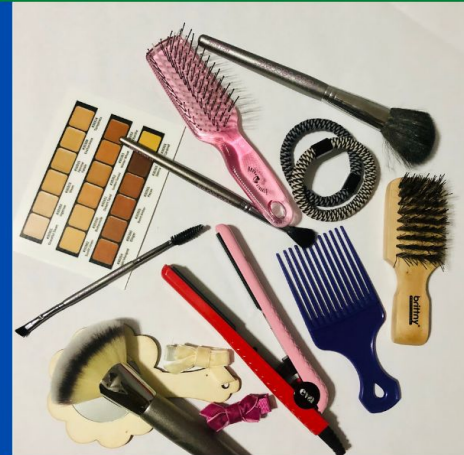
Everly

- Medium brown skin tone
- Coily afro hair, usually worn in braids with beads
- Exhibited agency
- Daughter of single, high school graduate
- Lived in neighborhood

Collective Instrumental Case Study



Children make sense of the world through acting out experiences with prop boxes. (Myhre, 1993)





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What did I Find?

Q1 Findings

How do Black preschool girls engage in play with racially diverse dolls?

1

Racial
Awareness
Shapes Play
Politics

2

Racial
Preferences
Shape Play
Behaviors

3

Racial
Identification
Shapes
Imaginary
Play

1 Play Politics



Switching Dolls

Dolls as Currency



Everly (holding the dark Black doll): Can I have that doll? Avanthi (holding the Latina doll): I want this one. Everly: Avanthi, please, Avanthi. Avanthi, yesterday you played with me outside. Avanthi: Nooo!



Amber: I want this one (pointing at the Latina doll).

Avanthi: Ok, I'm gonna get this one (referring to the White doll).



Everly hands Lauren the Latina doll and a comb. Lauren: Ok, you're the mommy now. I'm the sister. Lauren hands Everly the pink phone. Everly: Give me this baby (referring to a soft White baby doll on the floor).

2 Play Behaviors

Rejection of Black Dolls

Playing with other dolls



Sharing dolls

Playing with other toys



Mistreating Black dolls

Leaving the house area



2 Play Behaviors



Everly enters the house area and looks around.

Everly: Avanthi, can I have this [Latina] doll?

Avanthi: No.
Everly frowns.

Avanthi: There's another one in there!



Amber: Lauren, can you share with her?

Lauren: Yeah...Here.
(holding out the doll)
Everly grabs it excitedly.

Lauren: You can hold the baby, and I can brush her hair.



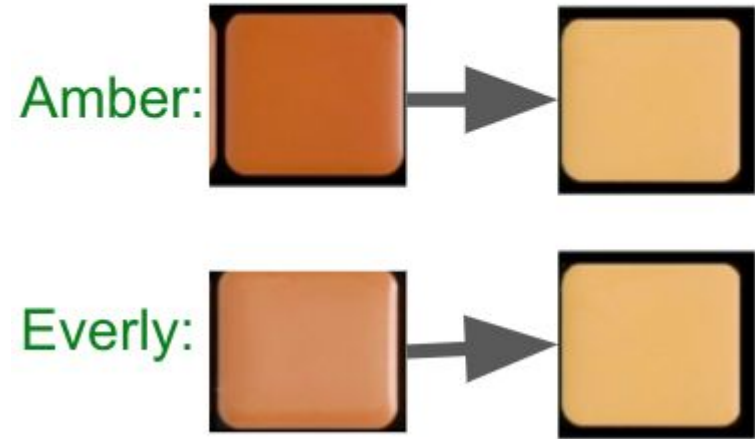
Everly picks up the darker Black doll: I'm gonna cook my baby in the pot.
Me: What are you doing?

Everly places the doll in the pot and then turns the knobs to turn on the stove.

3 Imaginary Play



Skin Color

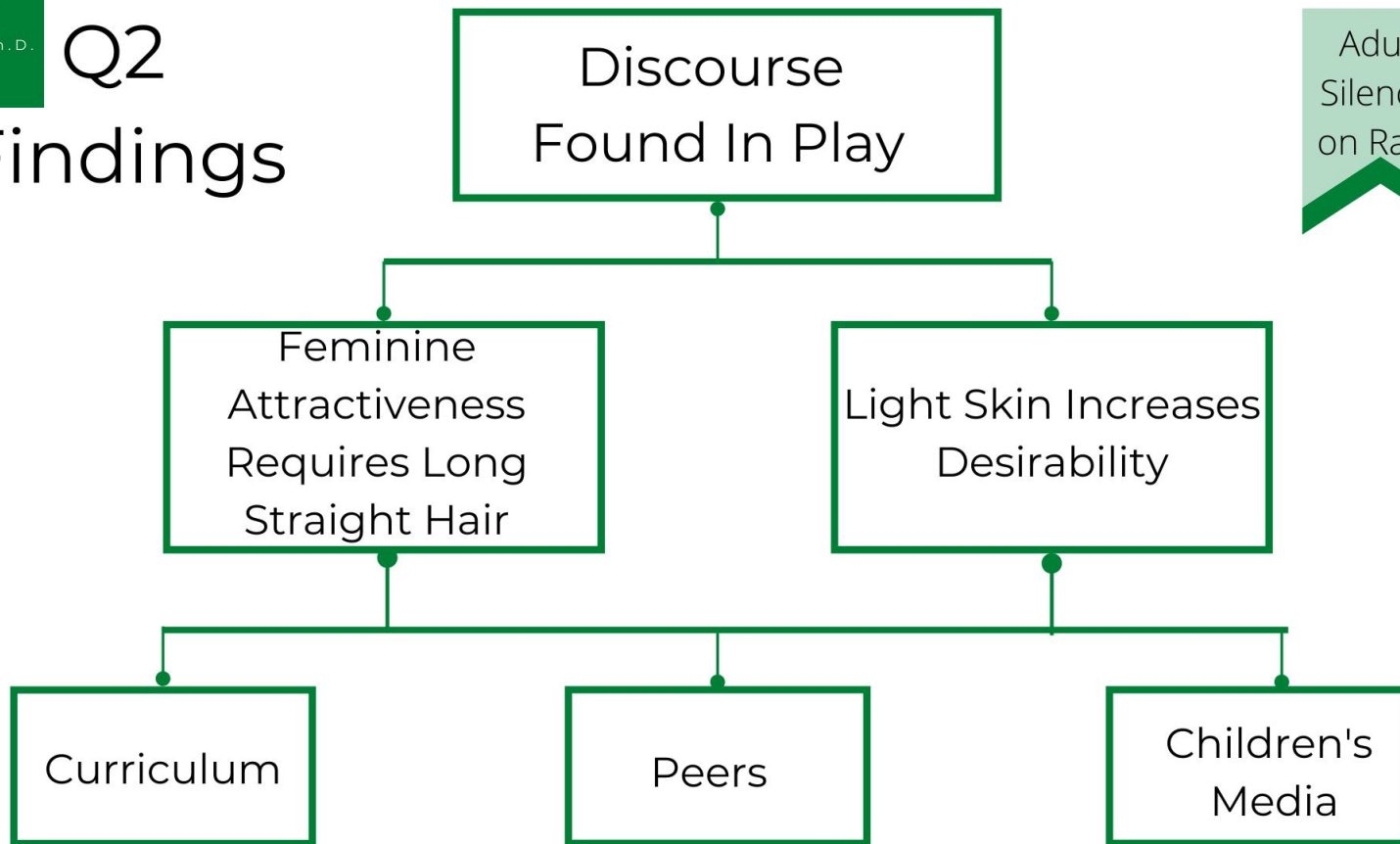




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Q2 Findings

Adult
Silence
on Race





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Poll 2

Examining Racial Identity Development in Play Behaviors

- **Racial Awareness through Antiracist Rules**
 - Sociodramatic play is rule governed (Bodrova & Leong, 2015; Frost et al., 2012) and the rules can be used to assert power (Arnott, 2018; Wood, 2014).
 - Adoration of Whiteness as consequence of colonialism (Fanon, 1967)
- **Racial Preferences through Rejection of Black doll**
 - See MacNevin and Berman, 2017 to Clark & Clark, 1939
- **Racial Identification through Changes Made to Self**
 - Black women's (girl's) appearance seen as negative (Caldwell, 2013)
 - White privilege is partially given by appearing White (Leonardo, 2009)

Implications for Practitioners

- Enact CRP
- Address race instead, don't ignore it
- Partner with families to help create multiple protective contexts



For updates, tips, and suggestions...

