

# **World Making and World Breaking: an Analysis of the Impact of Moments of Disruption on Preschoolers in the Classroom**

**Praxis Project Thesis: Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts — as part of the Community, Youth, and Education Studies Major at Clark University**

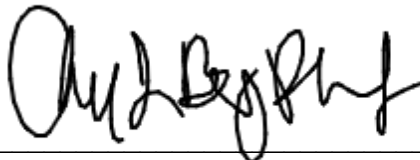
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### **Abstract**

This thesis research was designed to examine the notion of disruption in schools because in my time in schools throughout high school and college I have come to realize that disruption occurs within the student's worlds and yet they are not being given what they need to be able to address that for themselves. Instead, the students are being labeled as disruptive when they are struggling to feel safe in their space. In order to investigate this idea I worked in a preschool classroom where I observed how the students interacted with one another and the classroom to interrogate how teacher's current views on disruption impacts these students and their educational experience.

## Acknowledgements

The thesis you are about to read would not have been possible without the support and guidance of several people and I want to explicitly state that I am forever grateful to them.

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Lastly, I want to thank my incredible parents. It is not possible to thank you in a few sentences in the acknowledgment section of my undergraduate thesis, but it is at least a start. Thank you for your unconditional support, for fostering my love for teaching, for making me laugh when I needed to most, for helping me remember to breathe, and for never letting me forget that I can do it.

## Introduction

### How my World in Education Has Lead Me to this Research

*School is often the first place children interact with those not in their family on a daily basis and thus start learning how their wants and needs fit into the larger world and how their peers' experiences also contribute to their own life and identity. Everyone shapes their own world within the larger world and school is an extremely important part in the development of one's world, because you are learning new things both academically and socially which influences how you see yourself and the worlds around you. One's world consists of the literal and psychological space when creates for themselves based on their wants, needs, and previous experiences in different spaces.*

*My experience in school was unlike any other. I went to a small Quaker school called Media Providence Friends School (MPFS), in the suburbs of Philadelphia from preschool through eighth grade, had no more than 16 people in my grade at a time, and my father was my computer teacher in second and third grade, the head of school starting when I fourth grade, and then also my Quakerism teacher in eighth. Additionally, my dad started working at MPFS when I was two weeks old so my world included this particular school from the very beginning. I had teachers in middle school who had held me when I was only months old; my parents brought me into a science class within my first few months of life because the class was learning about babies. Once I actually started attending the school as a student, I was quickly welcomed by all of the teachers because they had known me for a few years already; and by the older students, because they had my father as a teacher in the middle school. My world at school was shaped by these external truths about my life and I think the community that surrounded me in school at such a young age has heavily contributed to me wanting to be a teacher.*

*While I was lucky to have such a strong educational community starting at age three, having my father as my head of school also shaped my educational experience, and my personality, in other ways that did not always feel positive in the moment. I loved having my father as such a prominent part of my educational experience, however because my father was the head of school many of my classmates thought I was getting special treatment because I never got sent to the office if I got in trouble. However, I was terrified of getting sent to my father*

*so I stayed pretty quiet in class and refrained from doing anything that could possibly have me sent to the office. Additionally, when my friends were sent to the office they were sent to my father once we reached sixth grade, they would occasionally return to class upset with my father and therefore would complain about him with me right there. Since my father became the head of school for half of my time at MPFS it was an adjustment for me, and my classmates, which I think played a role in how they perceived me being treated differently, my struggles with separating the complaints about T.Earl from my dad, and that it was harder for all of us to the fact that the head of school was my dad. I once had to sit through an entire class where my peers complained about the school and my father and then at the end the teacher finally remembered I was there and apologized to me but that experience has still stuck with me .*

*Now, looking back on my time at MPFS, I realize that to some extent I likely did get special treatment from some teachers whether they meant to or not and I know that my father was extremely good at his job and that my peers complaints were not about him as a person but them being annoyed that they had gotten in trouble. The three different worlds I lived in as a child at MPFS: a student, a daughter, and a friend, shaped my world then, and still continue to shape my world today both inside the classroom and in my life as a whole. I often wonder if I had not had my father at school with me if any of these worlds would have been shaped differently for me. However, I believe that the educational world I had growing up has shaped me into the person I am today and I am forever grateful for these experiences and the worlds I created. Additionally, this experience has impacted my thesis work because I have witnessed a school from many different perspectives and saw the ways in which teachers and experiences both inside and outside of the classroom influence one's classroom experience.*

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When I started my three part praxis sequence for the Community, Youth, and Education Major at Clark University in the spring of 2021 my goal was to somehow center the students in the Worcester Public Schools who were labeled as “disruptive” to the classroom environment. In the time I have spent in schools in both Eastern Pennsylvania and Worcester Massachusetts as a student, volunteer, and teacher I have seen students get labeled as “bad” or “disruptive”; and have admittedly labeled students as this myself because I was conditioned to think that students could be “disruptive” or “bad.” However, as I have continued to learn about the education system and how to be an educator I have realized that these labels have far more to do with the system

than with the student, and I hope to not only change my outlook on disruption through my thesis framework but the outlook of others. When teachers label students it does not only affect them for that year of their education, but quite possibly for the rest of their educational experience because they have internalized that they are what their teacher labeled them as, and their teacher communicates their ideas of the student to their new teacher the following year. Additionally, when a teacher labels a student as “disruptive” they limit themselves from being able to see the gifts the student does have to offer and from helping that student reach their full potential because the label can cause them to only focus on the fact that the student is “disrupting” their classroom.

Before I go further I think it is important to define what “disruptive” and “disruption” mean in the context of this thesis and classrooms. The notion of disruption in the classroom often refers to students causing a pause or stop in the lesson due to a behavior that is deemed to be inappropriate at that moment. A student is then labeled as disruptive when they cause moments of disruption frequently in the eyes of the teacher. It is also not uncommon for students who are seen as disruptive to also be labeled as a “bad” student. While these are the definitions I am operating with I do not agree that students are disruptive or bad as I will explain in this thesis.

I have realized through my thesis journey that these student’s “disruptions” come from a place of the child’s own world being disrupted, and that every child is dealing with their own disruptions in the classroom, and in life, they all just have different ways of communicating how the disruption to their world affected them. Some do not communicate it at all, for some it is a simple sentence that might go completely unnoticed by those they are trying to communicate it to, and for some, it might be loud and clear to the whole room. I’ve come to believe from this work that no matter the response it is imperative that students feel that the breaking of their world is acknowledged if they attempt to communicate that.

I initially set out to focus my research on the students who expressed their inner struggle with a loud outburst because during my time in school I noticed that these students were sometimes left out of the lesson. While I can see why it was easier to distract the students with another task rather than include them in the lesson, I wondered if there was a way to have the student still gain the knowledge they needed in a way that better fit into where they were in the moment rather than having them do something unrelated. Despite this concern driving my initial research I quickly realized that every student in the classroom had moments where they could

not be part of the lesson mentally even if they physically seemed like they were engaged in the lesson. This realization led me to reshape the way I was framing my thesis and encouraged me to include all of the students in the classroom in my analysis and dig deeper into different reactions students have and how all of these reactions are calls for help no matter how loud or direct the call.

### ***Minor Challenges***

When considering where I wanted to explore the notion of disruptions and what the students are really trying to communicate I could only think of one place I wanted to complete my undergraduate journey and that was with Mrs. Kelly and her students. I was placed in Mrs. Kelly's kindergarten classroom my first year at Clark for Complexities of Urban Education, a required course for all CYES majors, and have continued to work with her over the past three years. Therefore, finishing my undergraduate experience using her classroom as my Praxis site felt like the best option. However, while I did not question where I wanted to do my research there were still obstacles as I was about to start my data collection. This past summer, the summer of 2021, Mrs. Kelly switched schools and started teaching preschool instead of kindergarten. Therefore I had to slightly change how I was thinking about my project because the students were going to be younger than I had originally imagined and the structure of a Head Start preschool classroom is different from the structure of a kindergarten classroom for several reasons one of which is the considerable amount of development that occurs in this time, making the switch a little overwhelming at first. However, now I do not think I would have the thesis I do had I not been in Mrs. Kelly's preschool classroom and think that this switch was a gift in disguise.

### ***Inspiration and Goals***

There is one particular moment in Mrs. Kelly's kindergarten classroom that was my inspiration for the creation of this project that I want to highlight in order to give a better understanding as to why I have chosen to engage in this work. One year, she had a student who would get upset and seemingly shut down. Sometimes this would involve a loud outburst of emotions and other times this would simply result in the student sitting silently in one of the cubbys. This puzzled me because I could never quite figure out why this student had different reactions and why their reactions were occurring, and I never figured it out when interacting with that particular student. However, as I gained more experience in the classroom and continued my



academic learning through readings and discussion in my classes at Clark, I now realize that it is possible this student was reacting to different instances in which what they wanted to happen or thought was going to happen did not occur and these different responses were a reaction to their desires not being able to be met.

Therefore, for my project I wanted to be in the classroom with Mrs. Kelly to continue learning from her and from her students as they learn what their place is in school. Additionally, I hope that my new perspective on what leads students to have responses to a disruption in their world can give other educators and people who work with children a different outlook on what is really occurring in the child's mind and therefore in the classroom. While this task is a lot to accomplish in one research project that was only able to last a few months, I am hoping that through my research I can at least help myself, and maybe some others, think more critically about how we understand disruptions. I also hope with a different outlook I am able to address these moments that we intuitively label as disruption in a way that might be more beneficial to teachers and students as they work together to create a welcoming classroom environment. In order to do this I have two main research questions, and several sub questions, that I used to guide my thinking:

1. What does “world making”, “world breaking”, and “world reshaping” look like?
  - a. What does “world making” look like?
  - b. What leads to “world breaking”?
  - c. What is the response?
  - d. What happens after that leads to “world reshaping”?
  - e. What are the interactional consequences of the response?
2. What is the world framework and how does it reshape how I analyze and respond to “disruptions”?

The process of coming to these two main questions and sub questions was complicated and the questions changed several times throughout the process. The final ones above seemed to best scaffold the process of understanding what each section of the world framework means both individually and how the stages function together to frame a student's world within the classroom. Additionally, I believe that in doing this work it is important to address and analyze what I have learned and how this framework has helped me to think differently in the classroom, in hopes of helping others to see how this framework can reshape the ideology of disruption and

the labeling of students.

## **Ethnographic Context: The Who, Where, And When**

### ***Where:***

I conducted my praxis project research in a preschool classroom at South High Community High School (SHCHS) in Worcester, MA. There are two preschool classrooms in the basement of SHCHS, in a singular hallway that also has a classroom for the Early Childhood Education (ECE) students and a nursery. The only people allowed down the hallway are the ECE students, faculty and staff, and parents which makes the preschool feel like its own area. Since there is an ECE class that students can choose to sign up for, there were a few high school students in the classroom in the morning who were also helping out while I was there. The classroom also has a two way mirror for ECE students to look through in the observation room so that they are able to observe the students without being seen by the students and potentially distracting them from what they are doing in the classroom.

The classroom itself is relatively big in order to provide the students with space to learn and play. There are four big star-shaped tables, that can be easily connected, that are used for meals and learning centers (see Image 1). In front of the classroom there is a rectangular rug where the students gather for circle time and to do movement-based activities such as dancing videos; there is also a smaller rug in the back of the room that is mainly used for playing with the toys in that area (house, people, blocks, etc.)(see Image 2). There is also a small toy kitchen and dress up area, as well as a sand table that the children love to play in when given the chance (see Image 3). The classroom is decorated with the children's art work as well as some "normal" classroom decor such as a calendar and inspirational signs. Each child also has half (or a third) of a giant cubby for their backpacks and nap time things as well as a plastic bin on the bottom for miscellaneous things they collect throughout the day, or for the teacher to put things in if the student misses a day of school and the teacher does not want them to feel left out of an activity they missed. The classroom is connected to the other preschool room in two places, through the kitchen in the back of the room and the bathrooms in the middle section of the classroom. The students typically stay in their own classroom, however the two groups do merge throughout the week for walks, recess, celebrations, special guests, and other various activities.

The day starts with breakfast every morning, provided by the Worcester school district, and then as the students are finishing up they are allowed to read on the rug until Mrs. Kelly plays the hello song or another movement based song. After the initial song they typically do another movement based song such as freeze dance or tooty-ta before starting the morning meeting. Morning meetings typically include the calendar where students sing the months of the year that is danced to with the movements of the macarena. Other than the calendar the activities of morning meetings vary depending on the main focus of the week. They sometimes focus on a letter or they focus on a category such as food or firefighters. They then do activities based on the focus of the week which can consist of reading, doing a mystery bag, a powerpoint that focuses on counting or letters, etc. After morning meetings the students go into centers where the activities also revolve around the focus of the week. There are typically four centers: one focused on art, counting, manipulatives (playdough, blocks, etc), and literacy which is typically revolving around the letter of the week; however the specific activities that occur in each center vary. For instance on November 22nd the four centers were pattern blocks to trace the shape of a turkey for manipulatives, hand print turkey's for art, fruit patterns with mini toy fruits for math, and stamping the letter G for literacy. As students finish the centers they go into play time which lasts until around 11:30, and then they either take a walk around the school or play on the playground, Outside if it's nice and inside if it's raining or too cold. The students then return to the classroom for lunch and nap time before their parents pick them up.



Image 1: Star-shaped Tables connected for Lunch



Image 2: Back Rug with Blocks and Doll House on top



Image 3: Front Rug with Circle Time Calendar

***Who:***

While I have explained the classroom context and typical lesson plan, I think it is important to depict the students who are in said classroom and are the participants in my research. The class had 10 students to begin with and 9 students once the data collection process ended (another student left after I had finished collecting data). The class initially had three boys and seven girls, who were three and four years old, when data was collected, and the students come from a variety of different cultural and racial backgrounds. I invited all of the students in Mrs. Kelly's class to participate, through consent forms sent home to their parents since they are too young to consent for themselves. Of the ten students, eight of the parents gave their consent for all forms of data collection, and the eight students will be referred to by a pseudonym instead of their name.

***Brief Description of Each Consenting Student:***

1. Akunna was one of the students in the classroom originally, but moved to Canada during winter break, so the moment he is a part of happened earlier in the data collection process. Akunna is great with understanding what needs to be done in the classroom and loves to help out. For example, if someone is being too loud Akunna will cover his ears and make noises in order to let others know that the noise is not okay for the classroom. Akunna is also extremely focused when he enjoys the task at hand. For instance, Akunna spent 30 minutes playing with cubes on the rug, only the red ones, while the other students played with various activities around them. Akunna struggles with communication through speech, instead Akunna typically communicates through hand gestures and throat noises. Akunna can verbally communicate some letter sounds and words. For instance, Akunna can say "no" and at least letters A through D as well as U. Akunna also loves to meet new people and include them in his world. For instance, one of the first times I was in the classroom Akunna pulled me over to the two way window and would do a dance and then look at me to copy the dance.
2. Nick is one of the younger students in the classroom. Nick is an upbeat child most of the time and gets very excited about the smallest things. Nick loves to play with, and wear, stickers. Nick is also very smart and knows all of his numbers, letters, and most everyday

things such as foods and animals. Nick loves to watch videos on the smart board or iPad and enjoys playing games on the iPad as well. However, Nick does struggle with understanding how his actions affect others and sometimes can get aggressive with himself and others, although he has improved in this aspect over the last few months. Nick also does throw things around the classroom, which can cause a mess, as a way to deal with his emotions sometimes, but does eventually clean up his mess. Nick is a kind child who sometimes struggles to communicate what he needs in a way that can help us help him.

3. Kay is relatively quiet but seems to really want and appreciate connection to others. She is incredibly thorough when going through all of the centers, but particularly likes to focus on art. She also prefers to observe during movement activities and does not frequently ask for help unless it is offered. Additionally, she likes to play in the kitchen area and make up family oriented games with the other students in that area. When playing in the kitchen area Kay likes to have a say in what is happening in the game and does not simply go along with what the other students are proposing.
4. John is a leader in the classroom. He likes to share his knowledge with everyone and help his classmates by informing them of what they should be doing if they are unsure. Additionally, the other students seem to listen to John when he asks them to do something, even if they had not been listening when the teachers asked previously. John does sometimes struggle with giving up control in play situations when other students and also has opinions on what they want the game to look like and does occasionally get frustrated if people are not listening. John also likes to believe that they can do things others cannot, possibly because he knows he is on the older side of the class.
5. Mena appears to be one of the oldest in the group and is typically engaged in the lesson and sharing their knowledge with the rest of the class. Mena likes to help out by assisting Nick and making sure that he is following the rules, helps him with some of the activities, and includes him in some of the games they create during playtime. Mena purposefully breezes through the centers in order to get to the play time portion of the morning; she usually does the activities correctly but just enough so that it is complete. She is also a leader in the classroom and likes to have control over the playtime games and if she does

not have control she sometimes gets upset and leaves, rather than allowing others a chance to have a say in the way the game is played.

6. Melissa is very quiet and very sweet. She gets excited about the activities in the classroom and loves to dance during the song breaks. She enjoys playing with the other students and wants to be part of the group, but she also seems to be okay doing her own thing sometimes. During circle time she is usually pretty focused but will get off task if those around them are also willing to be off task. During centers she is very focused on the task at hand and does it to the best of her ability no matter how long it takes. Melissa also always seems to be laughing at what others have said or at themselves. Melissa was also absent for a few of the weeks that I was there for data collection and so is not a major participant in this research.
7. Taylor has formed strong bonds with a few of her peers, and myself, but tends to play on her own during playtime and other activities. During morning meetings, Taylor typically is on the rug with the rest of the class but is not always engaged in the activity itself. During morning meetings if something is out of place, either a toy or one of the teachers' teaching tools on the board, Taylor is the first to pick it up and put it back. Additionally, if one of the other students takes something out during playtime Taylor will try to get it from them in order to make sure it gets put away correctly. Taylor struggles with loud noises and does not enjoy the super loud movement songs or when someone is crying loudly. Taylor usually finds one or two centers she wants to do during the morning and is not interested in doing the other ones, but is extremely focused on what she wants to be doing at the other two. Additionally, at some of the centers she chooses to go to she decides what she wants the activity to be and does not necessarily do the task at hand.
8. Steph is the peacemaker in the classroom. She often reminds people that everyone is friends and that everyone should be included. Steph is also very aware of what is happening during circle time and is always eager to answer the questions the teacher is asking even if she does not always get the answer quite right. During playtime Steph is typically playing with the group in the kitchen area playing house, however she is not afraid to leave and switch to another group playing if she decides that she does not like what is happening where she is currently playing. Despite wanting everyone to be friends

Steph does sometimes struggle with sharing her friends and allowing others to play with the people she wants to be playing with.

The eight participants I have discussed are the consenting students in this study, whose names have been changed for anonymity, and all have taught me so much about myself and how to be a better teacher to my future students. Each one of them is extraordinary and they all bring so many strengths to the classroom. It is also clear that they all care for one another, their teachers, and me, which is a beautiful thing to be a part of.

### **My Positionality: Teacher, Volunteer, and Undergraduate Researcher**

To the participants in this study, the students in Mrs. Kelly's preschool classroom, I am a teacher who comes in on Monday mornings, and then on Thursday mornings instead starting January 20th, to help them learn and play with them during their free time. I started going into the classroom on September 20th, which was the start of their third week of school, so they know who I am and view me as a part of their classroom on the days that I come in. Additionally, since the students are young and their parents are the ones who provided consent they did not see me as someone who was there for research, but rather someone who was there to play with and who can help them with centers and other activities. I did debate whether or not to formally inform the students of my research project, but determined that since my project was about how I understood their worlds I did not want to interfere with how they showed me their worlds through trying to explain my research process.

My relationship with the teachers is very different than with the students. I have been working with Mrs. Kelly since my second semester at Clark University which means I have now been working with her for the last three years. Since I started working with her when I was still new to Clark, and the Worcester Public School system, I did not know what I was doing or how I could be the most useful in the classroom. Over time our working relationship has grown and she has become increasingly open with me about what happens in the classroom on days I am not there, and on the specific needs of each of the students. This indicates to me that I have become more of an insider in the classroom than an outsider because they trust me enough to share information about their classroom and students with me. Mrs. Kelly's assistant teacher, Mrs. May, has also welcomed me with open arms and is also willing to share stories with me and ask

for my help which also indicates to me that she sees me as part of their classroom community as well.

While Mrs. Kelly's classroom is the site of my research, I do not view myself as being there as a researcher. I am there to help the students and teachers first and then do my research second. While I found a way to do both at the same time through audio recordings and note taking when I was not needed, I still see my position as a volunteer assistant before a researcher. Part of the reason I view myself as an aid first is because I have worked with Mrs. Kelly for so long and likely would have been in her classroom even if I was not using it as my research site. I also feel more comfortable considering myself as a teacher/volunteer than I do an undergraduate researcher because honestly I do not feel qualified to take on such a title, and therefore think is a contributing factor to me viewing myself more as an aid than as a researcher in the classroom.

Additionally, since I did not feel confident in my abilities as a researcher it took me time to get my footing once I was approved by Clark to start doing my research in the classroom. It took me a little over a month to come up with my conceptual framework and determine what I wanted to be analyzing while in the classroom. The idea I had going into the process no longer felt connected to my goals once I interacted with the students more and observed the differences in how Mrs. Kelly operated her classroom in a preschool setting versus the Kindergarten setting I had worked with her in previously. My lack of certainty in my abilities as a researcher and my adjustment to the new space impacted my research journey because I felt lost at the beginning, however, I think because of my uncertainty I gave myself the space to change my vision which provided me with the chance to better my research and have an end result that reflects my identity as a future teacher and wanting to understand my students so that I can teach and understand them beyond academics.

### **Conceptual Framework: The World Framework**

In this thesis the conceptual framework is one of the most significant sections because it is at the core of how I thought about my data and came to understand my findings. This framework outlines the four stages in which I theorize how a child's world occurs and is fundamental in understanding the rest of my thesis. However, before I go into depth about what exactly the world framework is I think it is important to address how I came to this framework in my thesis journey.



As I went through my research process I found myself going through several stages of thinking about my conceptual framework. I originally had no idea what my conceptual framework would be or quite honestly what conceptual framework even meant. I then intended to look at my data through three lenses: an Individual lens, where I focused on specific students, a participation and activity lens, where I focused on what was occurring the classroom and how that affected the students, and a third lens focusing on redirection, where I intended to focus when students were being redirected and how that redirection was occurring. However, as I spent more time in the classroom I realized that there was a better way to encapsulate what was occurring in the classroom in a way that centered the students more than the activity and actions.

The world framework, that I constructed with the help of my advisor Sarah Michaels, analyzes the events in the classroom through the students and their “worlds.” I realized, both when in the classroom and when discussing what was occurring in the classroom, with my advisor, that the moments that were seen as disruptive often occurred after that student’s world either did not align with what the teacher wanted to occur and/or when the world the child had created for themselves in the classroom was interrupted. Thus, I shifted my framework to center students and how they create their own worlds in the classroom everyday. Their worlds are composed of their peers in the classroom, the activities occurring, as well as their own ideas about what they want and need throughout moments in the day based on previous experiences. **Each student’s world is the space the students are existing in both physically and mentally. They are all in the same physical space when in the classroom, but the way they perceive that space could be different, and what they want and need to make the physical space work for them varies from student to student and within each student based on the event occurring in the physical space as well as their emotional state in that moment.** The world framework has provided me with a new perspective that has helped me to see the needs and discomforts of kids who may not be outwardly expressing the breaking of their world but who matter and whose disrupted worlds are still important to recognize; as well as recenter students who are typically cast aside because they are seen as disruptive.

My world framework consists of four stages: world making, world breaking, responding, and reshaping; however, they do not have to occur in order and all four stages do not have to occur together. The first stage is *world making*, this occurs when a child is able to figuratively create a space for themselves in the classroom where they feel they have some sort of control

over their social and academic experiences. The making of their world occurs in a variety of ways. It can be shaped during circle time when they learn something new, when they are playing with a peer or on their own during playtime, or when they are working independently or with a teacher/classmate during centers. The world making stage has a broad spectrum of ways that it occurs and has been the stage that I have had the hardest time defining, because as I went through the process of analyzing my data more and more moments seemed to be contributing to the making of the student's worlds. Additionally, students' worlds are not always individual, they sometimes are made with others in which case a world is co-created; or in connection with one, or more of their peers, in which case they have created worlds that are connected and are influenced by others more so than normal. Students can also be part of their own world as well as a co-created world. A common example of this is during circle time when all of the students participating in circle time have their own world within that moment, but are also a part of the circle time world that Mrs. Kelly, or another teacher, has created with them. Given the possibilities that can influence the making of a world, this stage has been fascinating to analyze and expand on as I have delved deeper into my data and the possible meaning of what the students are saying and creating.

The second stage, *world breaking*, is the inspiration and root of this framework. A child's world can break for a number of reasons, not all of which can be seen or make sense to others. A student's world can be broken by the teacher if the child wants to be doing something in their world that does not align with what is okay to be doing in the classroom at that moment. For example, if the teacher ends playtime in order for the students to move into their outside time and lunch then the world they constructed around playtime is broken. In some cases the child is able to reshape their world and not have an outward response; however, on some occasions a student does have an outward response because the ending of their world in that moment affects them in a way that makes it harder for them to reshape their world. Their world can also be broken by another student if their actions or words either purposefully or accidentally disrupts their world in some way. For example, if a student is playing with blocks on the rug and another student comes over and knocks over the tower they were building, the child's world in that moment was centered around building their tower and when another student breaks it their world is then broken. In most cases the child who had their tower broken will have some sort of response to their tower being broken however the level of response will vary based on their world that day

and the child in general. A child's world can also be broken by something happening to them that does not have to do with the people around them. For instance, if a child is coloring and gets a paper cut the world they had made around coloring is broken because now they are in pain and are focused on responding to that rather than their coloring. World Breaking is not always easy to determine because what might be a world breaking moment to a three year old might not seem like one to their teacher, and therefore those working with kids sometimes miss this moment and are then confused by the next stage: responding.

While a child's world is broken when they are affected by something not already a part of their world, the way they react and the level to which they react differs depending on a variety of factors such as what breaks the world, the day, the child, etc. This outward reaction is the *responding stage*. It is important to note that while I say the child's outward reaction is the response, not every outward response is an obvious reaction. In some cases the child's response might be a change in their behavior such as getting quieter or secluding themselves from others or a singular sentence or noise that they vocalize but does not present as a response at first. However, no matter the extent of the response the child is indicating, or at least trying to indicate, that what occurred was impactful to them. Since the response occurs on a spectrum and is not one reaction for all students or even for individual students it is hard to conceptualize but it is arguably the most important aspect to understand. The response is also where a student's behaviors that are typically called disruptive occur. In working with young children, especially with the preschoolers at my praxis site, I have noticed that the louder responses, sometimes referred to as breakdowns or outbursts, are connected to a world breaking moment that sometimes goes unrecognized by others or happened at another point in the day, maybe before they even arrived at school, and they have not been able to fully reshape their world since.

*World reshaping* is the last stage in the world framework and it takes place when a child's world is able to be rebuilt after it's broken and after their response process happens, if one happens. World reshaping does not necessarily mean the child's world goes back to how it was before it was broken but rather that they have made a new world, sometimes with help from those around them, that they are able to accept and comfortably operate within. As with the other three stages the reshaping process differs depending on the child, why their world was broken, and what their response was. A child might be able to reshape their world on their own without needing to go outwardly go through the response stage, or their response stage might simply be a

question about why something in the classroom is changing and once they have an answer they are able to reshape their world because they understand there is a reason for the reshaping of their world. In some other cases the reshaping might take help from the teacher and involve the child being redirected from their world that was broken into a new potential world. Additionally, it is critical to acknowledge that a child's world might not be able to be reshaped that day, or the next, if the world breaking is something more complex, such as a traumatic event, and that their response might last longer and they might need to simply exist in the response phase before they are able to reshape their world or even express what occurred to cause it to be broken.

Furthermore, a child's world might be reshaped without their world even being broken. For instance, if a child learns something new or a new person comes into the classroom this could influence the world the child created but not in a way that disrupts or harms their world, but instead causes the child to want to reshape their world to include the new information or context of the classroom.

I have created this four stage world framework in order to help myself analyze and conceptualize the data I collected in a way that centers the students and what they are experiencing the world. This focus is imperative because children, especially young children, are often researched based on how they are developing in relation to what biological and social milestones they should be meeting rather than as people who are also experiencing the world and developing their own sense of self. Acknowledging young children being individual human beings who reach milestones at different times is especially important as we continue through the COVID-19 pandemic where children are not able to socialize in the ways they did three years ago and therefore the expectations for when they should reach certain milestones needs to be adjusted and children need to be seen in how they react to changes and disruptions in their world.

### **Literature Review: How Others Have Influenced My Understanding**

The behavior of students in the classroom has been discussed in depth by researchers focused on education and childhood development. They have also analyzed the biological, social, and environmental aspects that might influence their behaviors. Several studies have been done on how students interact with one another in the classroom; specifically focusing on how students who are perceived as disruptive by their teachers and/or peers interact with the classroom environment. For example, in a study done in 2020 by researchers Amanda Williford

and Virginia Vitiello found that students who displayed disruptive behaviors worked better when the activities they were doing had less teacher involvement and the students were working more with their peers (Williford and Vitiello, 2020). This finding was helpful in my own research because as I witnessed students interacting in the classroom I found that their worlds were often built with and/or included their peers more frequently than they included the teachers in the room. Students are able to connect with each other's world through play and stories which allows them to construct their worlds more so than when they are interacting with their teachers during structured lessons.

Vivian Paley explores the notion of storytelling and how stories guide student's play, which provides incredible insight into what they are going through for the teacher as well as helps their own development. In her book, *The Boy Who Would Become a Helicopter*, Paley goes in depth about how student's stories connect the student's personal lives to what they are doing in the classroom. Paley believes that children ultimately want to be in charge of their own story as well as included in others, and that their stories help them to make sense of the world, even if their stories do not make sense to us. **Her notion of a child wanting to be the center of their own story but also included in the story of others has guided my entire research process and ultimately inspired aspects of my world framework. The way she saw students making sense of their worlds through stories, helped me to see how students' worlds help them to make sense of their classroom experiences as well as how their world's influence their classroom experiences and the classroom experiences of others.**

Paley also discusses how children's stories might not make sense to those around them but makes perfect sense to them. She states that "Children are not focused on their stories making sense, but on being heard in their own story and included in others" (Paley, 1991, p.7). This quote captures her perspective around how children use stories in their lives and also captures how children do not always make sense to adults which I have found to be increasingly true as I have tried to analyze their worlds through my research. Paley uses her students' stories to center them in her classroom and frames her teaching around their stories. This practice could be used for students' worlds as well in that centering the worlds students have created for themselves through looking deeply at what their worlds mean and listening to what they need for their world to stay intact, could potentially minimize the responses students have if they are able to feel that their world is being acknowledged and included in the classroom.

While research has addressed students' behaviors and what might be at the root, some researchers have also started to unpack where the idea of “bad” behaviors came from and why behavior is discussed as an obstacle in teaching. It is believed that in order for teachers to be good at their jobs they have to have total control over their classroom. However, Millei and Petersenand (2014) argue that maybe the problem is not within the students behavior but within the system of controlling students behavior through behavior management tactics that are based on where students “should” be developmentally. They propose that instead of controlling the students, teachers should give students more control over their education and allow them to express what their actions are doing for them and how their behaviors are helping them learn, rather than assuming their behaviors are intended to be a disruption. In this philosophy they consider how students are only labeled as “bad” or “disruptive” because of the rules of the classroom, when the rules of the classroom were not made to suit a majority of the students who interact with them on a daily basis. This ideology helped me to consider how to better unpack the four stages of my world framework in order to demonstrate how the “disruptive” behaviors are often a product of the classroom environment and the idea that there needs to be some sense of structure and uniformity in order for the classroom to function effectively and not because a child is “bad”.

In understanding a student's world, it is important to understand where they are coming from because this heavily influences their world in the classroom, and because their world had already been made and/or broken before they arrived in the classroom. Therefore there are two teaching frameworks that I want to acknowledge as helping me to further my understanding of “disruptions” and then my own conceptual framework. The first, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), is a framework that stemmed from an architectural movement titled Universal Design that was created to make buildings more accessible and the education world adapted this idea to guide teachers in their lesson planning for all of the students in their classroom. UDL is described by the National Center for UDL as “a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone—not a single, one-sizefits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs” (Kieran & Anderson, 2018, p.4). This framework has been helpful as I have been exploring what I understand the four stages of the world framework to embody. The goal of UDL is to help teachers navigate the different types of learning in their classroom and how to create lesson plans

that consider all students. Similarly, my intention in creating the world framework is to create a different perspective on children's behavior in the classroom and provide a new lens on how students are interacting with their environments and what these interactions mean to them. Additionally, children know what they need in order to learn best, even if they are unsure how to communicate that, and therefore their worlds are the best place to meet them when trying to evaluate the best way to include different learners' needs in the classroom curriculum and space.

Just as it is critical to understand the way students learn and what students strengths and weaknesses are in order to create lessons that consider what each student needs to be successful, it is also important to be aware of the different cultural backgrounds the students are coming from because this too influences their interactions with and within the classroom. Therefore, I also want to highlight Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), as a framework that guided my ideology throughout the data analysis process. There are many outlooks on what Culturally Responsive Teaching entails, but the one I found to be the easiest to comprehend when reading Kieran and Anderson's piece on UDL and CRT was Hammond's 2015 framework. Hammond breaks CRT into four main themes: awareness, learning partnerships, information processing, and a community of learners and the classroom environment that together form Culturally Responsive Teaching. Awareness addresses how teachers need to be aware of the cultures within their classroom and the sociopolitical impacts their students may feel because of their culture. Additionally, awareness focuses on teachers needing to be aware of their own cultures and how this might impact their ideologies and biases surrounding their students. The idea of learning partnerships indicated how teachers and students can work together to ensure students feel ownership over their learning and feel comfortable advocating for their needs if they do not feel they are being met. Following along the lines of learning partnerships, the community of learners in the classroom environment goes beyond students feeling comfortable communicating what their needs are, to feeling comfortable making mistakes and learning from their peers and the classroom space as a whole. When something occurs that breaks trust and comfort within the classroom students should still feel they are able to talk through the incident and collaborate to resolve the conflict despite there likely being different opinions within the space. Lastly, information processing connects to the UDL framework through making sure the content is accessible to all students, however in this case it is not just from a learning needs aspect but also a relatable and culturally aware perspective.

These four themes of Culturally Responsive Teaching have helped guide my thought process during my thesis work through helping me further consider how what occurs in the classroom is just one aspect of the students lives, and that their worlds are influenced by what happens before they arrive at school and after they leave. In order to truly understand a child's world in the classroom it is crucial to have an understanding of their world outside of the classroom and include aspects of their outside world in the classroom world.

Additionally, while I developed this framework with guidance and insight from literature focused on teaching and behavior, I created this framework from my experience in the classroom through volunteer and job experiences I've had as a teenager and young adult. However, there is literature that relates to my world framework despite not being a contributing resource as I constructed my framework. One that stands out is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Bronfenbrenner's theory analyzes children's development through a five layered system, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem, with each level expanding more on how society influences one's development. The microsystem is the layer closest to the child and includes their family, school, neighborhood, etc. This first layer is most similar to my idea of worlds because these structures are influencing the child's world most directly because they are the structures the child interacts with most intentionally and frequently. The next level of Bronfenbrenner's theory, the mesosystem, explains the connections between the structures in the child's microsystem which also correlates to my world framework. This layer relates to my framework because the world children create for themselves is the result of what they want and need from their interactions with those around them and the events occurring within their space which often is structures within the microsystem. These first two layers of Bronfenbrenner's theory are similar to my framework of worlds, but differ in that they are focused on the development of a child whereas my world framework is focused on how children make sense of their environment, their interactions with those around them, and their wants and needs within the physical space they are existing in. The final three layers of Bronfennbrenner's theory do not directly relate to my conceptual framework as much as the first two, but can still contribute to what the child wants and needs. The exosystem is the structure with which the child's microsystem interacts but the child does not directly interact. For instance, the parent's workplace and their schedule or the board of the school the child attends. Both of these structures influence the child's life but might not impact their world depending on how aware they are of



these structures' implications on their experience. The macrosystem consists of cultural and societal norms and rules that exist within the community. These can affect a child's world through the way they are raised and as they get older, possibly more directly as they start to deepen their understanding of their culture and the societal norms that they might or might not agree with. However, in the case of the preschool students I focus on this layer that influences their world through how their parents raise them, but the child is not consciously using these structures to construct their world. Lastly, the chronosystem includes environmental changes overtime that might impact the child's life such as social change and war. This layer, like the macrosystem might influence the way the child experiences their physical world and how they interact with the adults in their life, but it might not consciously be affecting their world unless something occurring in the chronosystem ends up directly impacting their world such as the loss of a parent due to war.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory has similarities to my world framework because of how the different layers impact a child's development and therefore the way they see themselves in the world. However, there are differences in our ideologies because my world framework is more focused on how a child makes sense of the world and how their mental state, as well as the physical space, impacts their wants and needs throughout their day. My framework looks more at the child themselves and how they are making sense of the world whereas Bronfenbrenner uses the world to make sense of how children develop through the impacts of the different layers on their development.

These ideologies helped to guide my thinking as I unpacked the stages of my conceptual framework and, in the case of Bronfenbrenner, helped me to see how my framework has similarities to other frameworks and theories and can be further developed through understanding the similarities and differences. As I went through my analysis process these ideologies helped to provide different perspectives on students and their needs when interacting with the classroom. When considering all of the literature together it suggests that students have different skill sets and backgrounds and the labels they are given, whether they be positive or negative, influence their experience in the classroom and impact the world they create. When working with children it is important to see their world and not create a world for them based on bias and preconceived notions on how children are supposed to behave and interact with the classroom. Working with students to foster their worlds will not only validate their experiences

but also create a learning environment in which students and teachers can work together and learn from one another. While this framework was developed based mainly on my own experiences, the literature has helped me dig deeper into what I mean by each stage of my framework and investigate how I can expand on each stage to better encapsulate the complexities of children's experiences.

### **Methodology and Data Analysis**

My research occurred within a preschool classroom during their regularly occurring daily schedule meaning I did not implement any lessons or classroom practices into their typical school day. In doing this research I took an ethnographic approach where I was interested in understanding the classroom from the students perspectives through both observing and an active participant. I was first and foremost there to help Mrs. Kelly and Mrs. May with the students, the activities, and anything else they needed me to do. While I was in the classroom I audio recorded morning meeting centers, some one-on-one interactions I had with consenting students, and student's interactions with one another during playtime. In addition to recording parts of the student's days I also took notes while I was in the classroom on things I noticed to help me make sense of the audio when I was listening later, because I knew parts of it would be hard to comprehend due to the number of people in the room, the location of my recording device, and the fact that some of the students struggled with verbal communication. It is important to note that since the students were three and four when I started and a few turned five before I finished collecting data during the time of data collection. Additionally, consent was provided by their parents and they were not aware of me recording them throughout the day.

<b>Data Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Audio Recordings	Audio recording parts of Morning Meeting, Learning Centers, and other interactions small group or one-on-one interactions that seemed interesting and potentially informative	Since my main goal was to be helpful in the classroom I felt that audio recordings were the best way for me to discreetly do my research so that I was not distracted	I discovered that there were more limitations to audio recording on my site than I thought. First, there was often a lot occurring at once and it was hard to capture on audio due to noise

		from the classroom and was able to focus on helping rather than writing down everything that was occurring throughout the day.	level and the level of activity and nonverbal communication that occurred that are not possible to capture via audio.
Transcript	The transcripts are audio recordings, or sections of them, that I listened to and typed out verbatim in order to provide written data.	I initially was going to transcribe every audio in its entirety but quickly realized that was impractical and not necessary. Therefore, I listened to every audio recording, noted the important parts and transcribed sections that I felt depicted moments of world making, world breaking, response, and world reshaping	As with the audio recording transcripts do not fully capture all that was happening in the room and therefore the transcripts are missing some aspects that would make them more understandable. Additionally, they were extremely time consuming to do and therefore I was unable to transcribe everything.
Field Notes	Field notes are written bullet pointed notes that I took while in the classroom to capture moments I was not audio recording and/or stood out to me that I wanted to be able to reference while listening to the audio recordings	I think this is the most important aspect of my data analysis because when I was analyzing my data I found that having Field Notes helped to bring together the daily occurrences within the classroom that are not always easy to capture via audio recordings.	Since I am in the classroom mostly to help it was hard to write everything I wanted to down as descriptively as I would have liked. Additionally, since I cannot be everywhere and observing everything there are likely moments I missed or did not realize were world making, world

			breaking, response, or world reshaping
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In order to analyze the types of data I collected I copied my field notes into a google document along with notes I took while listening to the audio records and transcriptions of the audio recordings. The process of listening to the audio recordings was excruciatingly long. I spent hours listening to audios of circle time, centers, and play time. The amount of times people would ask what I was listening to and I'd respond "children." is comical, especially when you consider the look on their faces when I respond that I am listening to children without giving them context. While listening to the transcripts took a long time, being able to relisten to what had happened in the classroom allowed for me to relive the funny and puzzling moments that occurred throughout the day that sadly did not fit into the context of this paper. I also want to note that there were also moments that likely would have been beneficial to the data, but were too hard to comprehend with all the other noise occurring in the classroom and the distance my phone was from the moment itself.

Once I finished listening to the data I organized the notes by the day and time each recording occurred and then color coded based on if it was world making or breaking, if others were involved or impacted, if there was a response to the world breaking, and then whether or not the world was reshaped through highlighting the text with four colors:

Making

Breaking

Response

Reshaping or trying to help reshape

Through this process I was able to recognize that moments that I had originally overlooked were actually key world making and world breaking moments, that I had missed because they were different from the definitions of these moments I had created before I started analyzing. Additionally, once I had gone through and done my initial color coding I copy and pasted these moments into a chart where I further analyzed what happened, who was impacted, and which of the categories the moment addressed. I also color coded again to include the variety of moments occurring because most moments were not just one thing. Below is the color coding

key I used for the chart along with an example of one of the moments that I further analyze in my findings.

All

World Breaking

World Making

World making, world breaking, and response

World Breaking and Response

9	December 13th	Circle	All students (focus on Nick)	Nick sharing his toy with everyone on the rug Agrees to move next to Kay since it was her turn for the toy	Making
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Once I had the moments I was going to focus on in my findings grouped together through color coding, I was able to start breaking down why each of these moments were significant in terms of addressing my research questions and then eventually I took all of the individual blurbs about why each moment was important and linked them all together in order to get a full understanding as to why these moments together addressed the world making, breaking, responding, and reshaping stages of my world framework.

## Findings

As I was analyzing my data I found that there were three main themes that stood out when analyzing the different stages of the world framework, world making, world breaking, responding, and world reshaping and how they interact with one another. In the first section I address how world making and reshaping can happen simultaneously without world breaking occurring at all for students both in an individual sense and in a community sense. I then analyze a few instances when all four stages occur and how those can look different depending on the world breaking scenario and the child. Lastly, I address how a child's world might not be reshaped and that their response might last for multiple instances rather than in one moment. These three themes within the data seemed to be the most common ways in which a preschoolers world occurred within this particular classroom based on my color coding of the original audio

recording notes and transcripts, thus I am using these three themes to help me answer what these four stages mean together, separately, and how one student's world influences the world's of others in the classroom.

### ***World Making and Reshaping in the Classroom***

When I started looking at my research through the world lens I was unsure of exactly what world making meant, and the definition has changed a lot through the process. I realized that world making in the classroom comes in all forms and occurs repeatedly throughout the day. My focus was on the breaking of the worlds, and therefore I was considering world making to only be what the child's world was before it was broken. However, I have since realized that their world's can be made in more instances than it can be broken. I realized that world making is occurring all of the time because as a child learns new things or interacts with different people they are continuing to make and rebuild their world within the classroom and the world as a whole. One instance that helped me to see world making beyond world breaking, was in an interaction I had with John after the students had finished a lesson on habitats and how animals who live in cold places have blubber to keep them warm.

1	Me	Do you know what this is with the igloo?
2	John	A bear.
3	Me	Yeah, it's a polar bear.
4	John	I've never seen a polar bear.
5	Me	They live in really cold places.
6	John	Yeah, like the North Pole. <i>pause</i> Where Santa lives.

In this instance John is reshaping and making a new world in order to include the new information he and I are discussing together. Once I informed him that it was a polar bear, and that they live in cold places; he was able to reshape the cold world he has in his mind, Santa Claus and the north pole, and make it have a polar bear as well. John's ability to add context to his world and reshape what his world had looked like a few minutes before illustrates how students, and people of all ages, take what they learn to help them further make sense of the world and create their own world within the larger context of the classroom. Further, John being

able to reshape his world on his own and without it being broken embodies the complexities of the World Making and Reshaping stages. World Making and Reshaping happens consistently throughout the school day in small moments just like the one John and I had. Making and Reshaping does not only happen before and after moments where a child has their world broken and their response, but as children learn new things whether it be about the world, like in John's case, themselves, or each other.

Reshaping a child's world can also occur when the world they had created was based on incorrect beliefs. For instance, when we were reviewing what the students had previously learned about hibernation during circle time Mrs. Kelly asked how long bears hibernate for and Steph goes "probably, like seventeen minutes," because in her world that is a long time. Mrs. Kelly then informed her that it was much longer than that and she was able to reshape her world to include that bears hibernate all winter instead of just for seventeen minutes. This instance depicts that knowledge shapes children's worlds in different ways. While John reshaped his world when he learned about a new animal that lives in cold places; Steph reshaped her world in order to change the time frame bears hibernate for.

Children also shape their world through sharing whether it be knowledge, stories or things. Through sharing they are able to invite others into the world they have created which can allow for them to co-create a world with someone they are sharing with or have two separate worlds that have a connection. One example is an interaction I had with John and Mena. I had been talking about doll houses with one of the other students and John and Mena joined our conversation and started telling me about the houses they lived in. In this instance, they joined the world I had created with another student and then reshaped the world to make it their own. In sharing about their homes they also reshaped each other's worlds, as well as mine, by providing us all with more information about them and their lives to add to our picture of their outside worlds. In this moment we were all in our own world, because we were sharing different stories and had different reasons for being in this conversation, but our world's were connected through a common theme of John and Mena sharing about their houses and experiences in their homes.

Sharing stories is not the only way in which the students created links between others' worlds while also continuing to have their own world. The sharing of toys can also be a way to connect worlds, especially during a time when toys are not meant to be the focus. During circle time on December 13th, Nick had a toy that he wanted to let the other students take a turn with.

He had been struggling to come to the rug and participate in circle time a few minutes earlier, because it did not seem to fit into the world he was making for himself. However, once Mrs. Kelly brought out the iPad, Nick was more interested in becoming a part of the circle time world his classmates were co-creating with Mrs. Kelly. Once he was in the circle, Nick decided he wanted to share his toy with his peers, and made sure it got passed around to each of them. In this instance, Nick is in the world his classmates and teachers had co-created on the rug, but is also making his own world by introducing his toy and sharing it with his classmates.

A world had seemingly been created by his peers on the rug, that he initially did not want to participate in, but then once the iPad was a part of that world he seemingly also wanted the iPad to be included in his world. In reshaping his world to include the iPad he joined circle time, but was still reshaping his world because he seems to have still been focused on the toy he had been playing with and making sure everyone got a turn while also joining the co-created world. During this time he decided he did not want to sit on the edge of the rug with his peers, but once we explained that he should sit next to Kay because it was her turn with the toy, he was more than willing to sit next to his peer and become even more a part of their world. This indicates that he was willing to participate in their world, when it fit into the world he had made around the iPad and sharing his toy.

While the students were able to create their own worlds and connect with others' worlds through sharing it is not necessary for others to be involved in a student's world. Most, if not all, of the students had moments where they created a world of their own without the guidance of others. One example of this is when Akunna created a world with mini multicolored toy fruits. Akunna used the toy fruits that had been out for pattern making along with a mini toy lamp that came from the furniture bin for the doll house to create his own world. Akunna was able to create his own world with four tiny toys, and stay in this world for the duration of circle and playtime which typically lasts a little over an hour. In this moment, Akunna demonstrated how students create their own worlds when playing alone and how these instances are just as important to shaping their world as moments that involve others. Akunna's world in this instance looks very different from when Nick takes the toy he is playing with and shares it with everyone else. While both instances revolve around toys, Akunna is able to create a world of his own with only three toy bananas and a lamp whereas Nick incorporates others into his world through sharing his toy. Akunna finds that his world makes sense on his own and does not need to



interact with others in this moment to make his world. Often, when children are playing alone adults worry they are lonely, but it seems that Akunna simply found something that made his world and did not feel the need to interact with others in this moment of world making.

These instances of world making all look very different, but are all part of the complex process of world making and in some cases the reshaping that follows. A world can be created through a variety of ways such as play, sharing, and the gaining of knowledge as illustrated above. World making is not just one thing but a combination of things that make sense together in the child's head that create a place for them within a bigger space. World making also is part of students' creative abilities as well as independence and self-awareness through not only creating their world but also through understanding how others can be part of that world, but that others don't have to be part of that world. For instance, in the case of Akunna, his ability to create his world with four toys displays how in making his world he was engaging his creative abilities and building upon them through the creation of his world. This is just one example of the way world making is benefiting students' creative abilities, but students do this all of the time when playing and coming up with story lines or when they are simply telling you a story that is not always completely true, but is what they have created their world around in that moment. In making their worlds, preschoolers are also building their independence, because they are starting to consciously make their own space in the classroom rather than only being part of the world that others create for them. This also helps them to understand themselves as individuals and in the classroom and they are starting to understand that sometimes their worlds affect others, which I will further investigate in the next section.

### ***Full Circle:***

World breaking and the series of events that occur after the world is broken are different for every student and change based on what caused their world to break as well as other factors that might be at play in the particular world breaking moment. The reason a child feels their world is broken is also dependent on what their world has been and can be caused by another person, an event, or an external factor that no person has control over. For instance, during a circle time in January, Mena stated "I'm itchy, I'm itchy, I'm itchy" as the class was discussing hibernation and what animals eat in the winter. Her statement is acknowledged but the class then goes back to discussing the different kinds of animals that hibernate and what animals they see in

the book, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*, because they are about to read it. Mena contributes to the conversation about what animals she sees in the book, but then about two and a half minutes after her first remark she asks if she has a bug bite to indicate that she is still feeling itchy. She did not have a bug bite, it was just dry skin, but she was trying to communicate her discomfort in a different way. These two simple statements are saying considerably more than just that Mena is itchy. Mena is instead trying to indicate that she is not able to be part of the circle time world because her own world is now overpowered by the itchiness that broke her world. After the class moves on from her first response she does continue to participate in the circle time world, however her world is not reshaped yet because she is still focused on the itchiness, which is indicated by her bringing it up again within a few minutes. Once she brings it up twice the teacher realizes that Mena's mom sent her with lotion and I am able to bring her the lotion from her cubby so she can stop the itchiness and reshape her world and rejoin the circle time world. This moment, while seemingly small and not as obvious as some other world breaking moments and responses, demonstrates how a world breaking moment can affect a child's world greatly but their response might not indicate that their world has been broken. I did not register this moment as a world breaking moment until I was listening to the audio later and realized that Mena was trying to express her discomfort and indicate that her world within circle time had been made uncomfortable. She was unable to fully be present in the circle time world her classmates were engaged in until she could reshape her world to be comfortable again, which was possible once she was able to put on lotion.

Mena's world was broken by discomfort from an external factor that we were able to stop once the teachers in the room realized that her mom had sent her in with lotion for this exact moment. However, there are other world breaking moments that the teachers in the room cause because we take something away or an activity we decide to do ends up breaking the world of a student unintentionally. For instance, Taylor has a sensitivity to loud noises and has had moments where she has had to leave the room because another student is having a world breaking moment and their crying and screaming broke Taylor's world. In this case her world was broken due to a video being played. One morning for a movement break during circle time, we were listening to the song *Going On a Bear Hunt*, and the class was going to act out the song. However, as soon as the music started playing, she did not say anything to me but instead pressed one side of her head against my side to help cover her ear and then took my hand and placed her hand on top of it to

cover her other ear. She proceeded to stand like this throughout the entirety of the bear hunt song and the song that was played afterwards. Once the songs were over and Mrs. Kelly was calling the students back, I informed her that the songs had ended, but she was not yet ready to uncover her ears. Taylor still needed to go through her response process before she was able to reshape her world after the loud noises had caused a world breaking moment for her. She eventually uncovered her ears but still wanted to stand next to me and was not ready to join the circle; even after her friends asked her to, once I offered to sit next to her on the rug she felt comfortable enough to join the circle again. This world breaking, response, and reshaping process is puzzling because the bear hunt song has been played in the classroom several times and this was the first time Taylor had this particular reaction. Taylor sometimes eagerly participates in the dancing, sometimes stands there, and occasionally covers her own ears. However, in this instance the bear hunt song seemed to cause a big disruption to her world and her response process had multiple steps, coming to me, using me to help her cover her ears, and then wanting to continue to stand after the songs were over until I agreed to move with her. This causes me to wonder if Taylor had experienced another world breaking moment related to sound earlier in the day or the day before which she had not yet been able to reshape her world from and caused her to have a different reaction than she typically did to the videos. This example goes to show how students' responses change and how they can potentially be influenced by other world breaking moments that might not have occurred in the classroom and therefore the teachers in the room might not be aware of how the activity at hand could have major world breaking effects.

In Taylor's case her world breaking moment was because of a video the teacher played, not knowing it would break Taylor's world, and also needing to give the other students a movement break in order for them to be able to continue to participate in circle time. However, in this next example, Akunna's world was made and then broken by a teacher, not intentionally, but because what the class was doing shifted and so what Akunna was doing seemed to need to shift as well. During circle time Akunna was playing with playdoh at the table and was very focused on the "cake" he was making. However, he quickly realized that Mrs. May had put construction paper fires around the classroom and reshaped his world to include the fires by going around the classroom and pointing to the fires and making a scared face. He then took his playdoh "cake" placed it on the fire to pretend to cook it reshaping his world again to include both the fires and the playdoh. Mrs. Kelly then asked him to indicate to the class what he had

found which allowed him to help reshape his classmates' world and form connecting worlds with all of them. Mrs. May also helped Akunna to further incorporate fire into his reshaped world by giving him the new firefighter outfit to wear. However, once centers started Mrs. May asked him to take off the new outfit so that it would not get paint on it when he went to the art center.

This unfortunately caused the world Akunna had built around fire to break; and his response was to scream and make other noises that sounded like noises indicating distress and frustration. The teachers and I were able to help reshape his world by pointing out that he could help paint the cardboard box firetruck so it would be ready when he got his own firefighter hat from the fireman coming in later, that way his world still included fire but in a different way. In addition to us helping to reshape his world, John started to encourage the other kids to help Akunna finish his section of the firetruck; therefore connecting the worlds of the students at the art center in an effort to help Akunna feel better after his world had clearly been broken a few moments before.

John helping Akunna to reshape his world and creating a connection between their worlds exhibits how children's worlds can be formed together and/or coexist. While Akunna's world was being reshaped after his response to having to take off the firefighter costume; John was reshaping his world in order to include his classmate as his own response to Akunna's world breaking. Why John decided to reshape his world for his classmate I do not know, but his action created a joint world or at least two co-existing worlds. This moment illustrated how while children are creating their worlds within the classroom they sometimes include those around them in their worlds or co-create a world with their friends. It also depicts how activities in the classroom can help foster children's interactions and co-world creation. Along with activities helping with world creation this instance exemplifies how children witness the response of others and do not necessarily have their worlds broken by the response but instead decide to reshape their worlds in order to help a friend.

Although John helped Akunna reshape his world and included Akunna in his own world. Mena and Kay had a different experience where rather than helping reshape each other's worlds Mena broke Kay's world. Kay and Mena had co-created a world in the kitchen area during playtime where they were pretending to be family and animal doctors. However Mena learns that a few of their other friends are making a dollhouse on a different part of the rug and tells Kay to watch the baby and then leaves to join the other friends. Mena tells Kay to watch the baby as her

way of indicating she wants to leave their world to go play with other friends on the rug who were building a dog house, but this does not seem to be clear to Kay. Kay realizes that Mena left her and walks over to where Mena is now playing and the two have a conversation:

1	Kay	Heya ( <i>whining</i> ), play with me ( <i>inaudible conversation</i> ) you were playing with me first.
2	Mena	Kay, how about you play with me here? Because I'm playing right now.
3	Kay	But I liked the babies.
4	Mena	Fine, I'll play with you.

The two then do in fact go back to playing together, but since there was a breaking in their world and Mena did not seem enthusiastic to go back to playing together it is unclear if they reshape their joint world or if they create new worlds for themselves that are connected due to the game they are playing together. Since Mena did not seem eager to continue playing with Kay in the kitchen area I speculate that they might have two different worlds that are connected because Mena is not fully invested in this world and therefore likely has her own world happening. It is also possible that Mena's new world was broken and she did not reshape her world to include the game she had been playing with Kay but instead was just doing it because her friend asked her too and did not see herself in a world of her own but instead in Kay's world. Additionally, I wonder if Kay's feelings were hurt and while she still wanted to play with Mena she did not want to build a world with her since she broke their last world. There are many possibilities as to what was occurring in Kay and Mena's worlds at this point and I am not sure what the reality is, which depicts how complex the making and reshaping of preschooler's world's can be.

This world breaking moment between Mena and Kay demonstrates how one's peers can also be the cause of world breaking, especially when the world was co-constructed around a game. As I analyze this moment I recognize it is also important to consider that there might have been a world breaking moment for Mena that caused her to want to leave the kitchen and reshape her world around building a dog house with different friends on the rug. However, it is also possible that she saw friends doing other things and wanted to reshape her world to include

their game rather than the game she was playing. Either way, Kay's world was broken and her response was to talk with Mena about how she was hurt that she had left their game without telling her, and ask Mena to come back because Kay still wanted her world to include the game they had been playing, even if it was reshaped.

The full process of world making, world breaking, responding, and reshaping is complex and occurs in many different ways as described. However, in all of these scenarios other people were involved in some aspect of the process, highlighting how while one's world might be their own it is heavily influenced by the environment and people around them. Thus, their worlds change frequently throughout the day depending on what is happening and who is present.

### ***The Complexities of Reshaping:***

Unfortunately, not all broken worlds are easy to reshape. In some cases the child struggles with reshaping their world and any attempt at helping them does not seem to work for a long period of time. It is also not clear if a child's world is completely reshaped or if they are still figuring it out, but no longer in their response phase. In the two examples that follow Nick struggles with reshaping his world for a majority of the morning and in both cases it is unclear if he does ever reshape his world.

In this first instance, Nick wanted the skeleton dance song to be played as one of the songs to start off the morning. However, the hello song was already being played and there was no time for another one at that moment. Mrs. Kelly did promise that the skeleton song would be played for their movement break during circle time. However, Nick's world was being made around doing the skeleton song right then and when that did not occur his response was to throw a chair and then knock all of the food out of the fridge in the toy kitchen. We let Nick go uninterrupted through his response stage, until it got loud enough that it was clearly breaking the circle time world the rest of the class had co-created on the rug. At this point I went over to talk to Nick:

1	10:08am (approximately 30 minutes into circle time)	<i>Lots of dumping noises in the background from Nick knocking everything out of the kitchen</i>
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2	Me	Nick, what are you doing? Nick is this what we should be doing?.....Nick, what are we doing?
3	Nick	I'm not gonna clean up.
4	Me	You're not cleaning it up? You are just gonna make a mess?
5	Nick	I'm not gonna clean up. I don't feel like cleaning or messing.
6	Me	Well you can't make a mess if you're not gonna clean it up.
8		<i>Class putting their name cupcakes on the picture attendance chart to indicate they are at school</i>
9	Me	Nick, do you want to move your cupcake to tell you that you are here today?
10	Nick	I clean, I don't want cupcakes.
11	Me	Oh, you are cleaning now.
12		<i>Nick does then start to put the toy food back in the toy fridge.</i>

Nick started to clean up once he was asked to place his cupcake on the attendance board to show he was at school, because he seemed to really not want to participate in the cupcake activity as shown in his stating "I clean, I don't want cupcake". Approximately 15 minutes after Nick had asked for the skeleton song, Mrs. Kelly played it just as she had promised. Nick then stopped cleaning in order to participate, because that was what was originally going to make his world; whereas cleaning might have been part of the response process, but was not quite getting him to the stage where his world was made. After the skeleton song Nick then joined the circle and participated in the rest of the activities that happened during circle time. However, he was still fighting the idea of fully joining the circle time world and wanting to have his own world at the same time. For instance, he was sitting on the circle but did not want to sit where or how he was being asked to and instead exclaimed "no crisscross applesauce...NO."

This instance of world making, breaking, response, and reshaping is an example of the four stages happening in order within about twenty minutes. In these twenty minutes Nick

responds to his world not being made by throwing things and generally making a mess. This example illustrates how when a child's world is broken their reaction can cause a disturbance in the classroom. However, it also illustrates how Nick was responding to not being able to dance to the skeleton song and had reasoning behind making a mess that made sense to him even though it might not have made sense to others. Additionally, the process of reshaping his world took time and even after the skeleton song was played Nick's world never seems to be fully remade. Throughout the rest of the morning Nick struggled with creating a world he was happy with and frequently would move on from one thing to another indicating that he was struggling to reshape his world to one he felt comfortable in. Additionally, towards the end of play time Nick went over to where Akunna was playing and threw a toy that hit him in the head. Now, not only is Nick struggling to reshape his world after it had been broken, but in going through his response he injures Akunna and breaks his world. Akunna's world is seemingly reshaped relatively quickly because I end up getting an ice pack for Akunna and John asks if he can give it to him, indicating that John wants to, again, help Akunna reshape his world. Akunna then goes back to playing after holding the ice for a few minutes indicating that he was able to reshape his world after being hurt. This series of events also indicates how the response process can impact other students' worlds in different ways. Here, Akunna's world is broken because of Nick unintentionally injuring him during his response process, and in turn John reshapes his own world in order to help Akunna reshape his world after his response to being injured.

Nick's response process, while broken up throughout the day and seemingly unconnected to the original world breaking moment, illustrates how a student's world can be affected throughout the day even though it might not be obvious why they are having a response. However, it is possible that Nick did reshape his world at one point and it was then broken again leading to another response like not wanting to color and going to play with trucks instead or wanting to do the puzzle but then immediately walking away from it once it was taken out of the box. These instances could also be Nick attempting to reshape his world and us not letting him by asking him to color instead of allowing him to play with his trucks. This possibility illustrates how sometimes the world children want to make is being prevented by the plan the teachers have and therefore causing the students to have a response when they could have instead reshaped their world.



Another example of the teacher, in this case me, breaking a student's world occurred when Nick had been at the alphabet book center working on coloring his letter of the week and Mrs. Kelly got up, leaving her iPad behind, so Nick started playing with her iPad. I noticed he was clicking things and seemed to be getting into the settings of the app she had pulled up so I took it away so that he did not mess anything up on her iPad. When I took the iPad away from Nick I broke the world he had created around playing with the iPad, which I now know is a common world for him to create. His response was to whine and throw one of the other students' alphabet books on the floor. After his initial response we were able to redirect him to other activities however none of them were able to help him in reshaping his world. He would try something for a few minutes and then quickly give up and start whining again until we helped him find another activity to hold his attention for a few moments, however we were unable to find one that reshaped his world. Just before 11 he seemed okay playing with playdoh, which is usually a favorite of his, but even the playdoh did not seem to reshape his world on this particular day. Instead, he went over to Akunna and threw the cubes Akunna was playing with, potentially breaking Akunna's world, and then started hitting himself in the head. In this case Akunna simply looked at him in shock and then proceeded to clean up the cubes Nick had thrown and go back to playing, and did not seem to have a world breaking moment, or at least not one that evoked a response. Additionally, Nick hitting himself in the head after he makes a mess or throws something either at someone or just in general is common in his response process which I feel is an important highlight. However, I do not know why this is a common response for him and do not feel I am qualified to try and unpack it at this moment. In analyzing the moments that occurred after I took the iPad away I think it is possible none of these events would have occurred had I not taken the iPad away from Nick and broken his world originally. Why Nick struggled to reshape his world on this particular day is unclear, it also happened to be his birthday, which could potentially be a factor in his longer world breaking response.

In both of these examples of Nick taking time to reshape his world, and potentially not reshaping it at all, Nick's responses impacted the worlds of others which demonstrates how the worlds within the classroom are all intertwined and when one student's world breaks the others are aware and their world is sometimes reshaped because of it like in the case of John and Akunna and Mena and Kay.

### **Pulling the Pieces Together**

Going through the data I collected and considering my world framework in the process I realized that when I switched from my original thought process, where I only focused on specific students who were seen as disrupting the classroom, to my current framework I started noticing different things and writing different types of moments in my notes when I was in the classroom. The world framework helped me to see the students from a different lens and consider different ways to approach kids during their response phase to guide them get to a place where they can reshape their world. Instead of labeling students as disruptive based on their response; I found myself investigating their responses and looking for the world breaking moment in the moment in order to potentially help them reshape their world faster if I could consider the world they had and how to reshape it based on their previous world. I found this framework helpful in terms of allowing me to see what responses lead to labeling the students as “disruptive” and found that in seeing these patterns for myself I was better able to reconstruct my view of students who are deemed disruptive and see how they are just asking for help. Despite having a better understanding of what was occurring I still found several moments to be puzzling and could not quite figure out what the world breaking moment was, assuming it had occurred in the classroom.

Through analyzing world making and reshaping together I found that the preschoolers' worlds are being made and reshaped constantly as they are learning in both an academic sense through the lessons at circle time, conversations with others in the classroom, and through the centers after circle time; and in a social sense through playing with their peers, talking with those around them, and observing interactions between others. World Making and Reshaping are not simply the before and after of world breaking but their own significant stages that not only help the students to better understand the world around them and how their world fits in, but also helps their teachers and caregivers to better understand how their preschooler's view the larger world and have shaped their own world.

Additionally, while the students are making and reshaping their own worlds they are not always doing it alone. They are learning from those around them and in turn reshaping their own world to fit with the new information they are being given. Sometimes in making their world they want to include others in the classroom in that world and in doing so they likely reshape the world of others. This chain of world making and reshaping emphasizes that while each student

has their own world in the classroom their world would not be made the way that it is if it were not for those around them. The process of world making and reshaping can be done alone, but even so is often influenced by the context of the classroom and those in the space.

Just as the making and reshaping of a student's world is influenced by the context of the classroom, so can be the breaking of a student's world. Preschoolers have their own idea of how they want their world to look and feel throughout their day, and this idea can be reshaped as they learn new things, as discussed above; however, sometimes a student's world can be broken from the new aspects introduced into their classroom. When a student's world is broken that evokes a response, which looks different for every child and depends on the world breaking situation as well. A child's response that is most visible to those around them is typically loud and could involve throwing objects, hurting someone else, hurting themselves, running screaming, and/or crying. However, this is often the response that is easiest to pick up on and is usually the one that results in the child being labeled as "disruptive" or "bad" if this type of response happens frequently. Children also respond to their world being broken in ways that might not indicate as clearly that their world was broken. A child might simply state that something is bothering them or their demeanor could change indicating that they are upset by something that occurred even though they are not communicating it directly. In order to understand the complexities of a child's world being broken it is imperative to understand what their response could look like because in order to help a child get to a place of reshaping it must first be understood that they are in their response stage and might need that extra support.

In order to support all students, teachers also need to be prepared for students to not be able to reshape their world quickly and accept that some students might have responses that occur sporadically for a few hours or even potentially for the entire day. Additionally, it is possible that what broke the students' world cannot be fixed at school that day for a variety of factors. In this case it is important for the teacher to continue to support the student throughout the day and be patient with the fact that the student is unable to reshape their world and that if they could they would, because the student is also struggling in their response phase. When a student is struggling to reshape their world it is also possible other students worlds will be broken in the process which adds another level of complexity for the teacher because it is important to continue to assist the student whose world has been broken, but also important to

acknowledge how their response negatively affected the world of others and to support them in the reshaping process as well.

While it is essential for teachers to acknowledge and support their students' worlds it is also important to acknowledge that in doing so teachers have to consider many different worlds that might contradict one another and that it might not be possible all of the time. However, by starting to see children for their worlds instead of the labels we are trained to see and give, teachers, and others who work with kids, can start to provide students with the tools they need to be successful in the classroom no matter how their world might break and what their response might be.

### ***Limitations***

In concluding my thesis, I also want to acknowledge that this framework is not perfect. My framework does not directly consider all of the factors that could influence children's responses and that there is still so much more to consider in the complex minds of young children. However, I found that I felt better about how I responded to the students' responses and stopped to consider why they might be having the response they are having before going over to address their response in hopes of helping to reshape their world rather than further break their world. Furthermore, if someone else had been the one to observe and analyze my data it is possible that they would have come to different conclusions about the worlds the students were creating and what was occurring within them. I also think it is important to acknowledge that while I tried to be impartial in analyzing my data I have developed a connection with all of these students through working and playing with them for the past several months and that it is possible that this contributed to how I thought about my data and the students throughout this process.

I also think my framework would benefit from a deeper look into trauma and how trauma can impact a child's world in a way that might make it complicated to reshape and if the child is able to reshape their world it might take time for it to truly feel like they are comfortable in the new world that they made.

### ***Final Thoughts:***

Preschoolers are creating and recreating their worlds all of the time based on what is occurring around them, and occasionally during that process they have moments that have been

deemed disruptive by educators and others who work within school environments. However, through my thesis work I have come to realize that students are not disrupting the classroom; the classroom is not being designed to accommodate the many different worlds students walk into school with every single day. I have also realized that this idea of people disrupting goes far beyond the classroom and is ingrained into our ideas of how society should operate. When people protest on the streets or fight for what they believe in in other ways they are being seen as disrupting society. When they are simply asking for their rights and society is disrupting their worlds by preventing them from having the rights they deserve. While these moments are on a much larger scale than the moments of disruption a single preschooler has in the classroom, it is still important in understanding how this idea of disruption starts when students first enter school. The idea of disruption is based on a “norm.” However I have realized that maybe it is the “norm” that needs to change to accommodate the vast range of worlds and needs that occur within classrooms and society as a whole every single day in the United States.

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