2

Everyday Life in Ms. Bailey's Classroom

"Own What You Are Doing" (Ms. Bailey)

One morning in late September, the children in Ms. Bailey's class chatted their way to the carpet area where they sat, most of them squished together or touching in some way. Ms. Bailey faced them, her small frame in a child-sized chair. Her lesson plan sat on her lap. The class had spent the last few days talking together, reading examples, and brainstorming about how authors include details in their writing. Instead of writing "I like pizza," she was encouraging them to write "I like warm pepperoni pizza." This particular day Ms. Bailey had selected a book to introduce the concept of adjectives.

As soon as she started to read, however, there was a loud screeching sound. Everyone turned their heads to see what it was. Mary, a seven-year-old with large, brown, rather serious eyes and a bow in her brown hair, was the first to realize what had happened. She jumped up and motioned to the back of the room. Her noticing got everyone's attention.

Mary was not someone who spoke up first or very often. She was known for being the fastest first-grade runner in the school and had significant motor skills for her age. She moved with strength and easily challenged people to races on the playground. She navigated Spanish and English at the same time and communicated back and forth in both languages. Both of Mary's parents were recent immigrants from Mexico, and Mary was the middle child with a baby brother and older sister. We often saw her hugging her baby brother and walking hand in hand with her parents. Though she had a supportive family and impressive interpersonal skills, Mary's academic trajectory was labeled "at risk." The school worried because her diagnostic reading score in English was at level 1 (the lowest). Her writing and math skills were considered low kindergarten level. Mary's enthusiasm for school and involvement in discussions around reading and math were inconsistent. By standardized measures

endorsed by the state, she was an underachieving student in need of academic and remedial interventions. Ms. Bailey felt intense pressure to focus on, track, report, prioritize, and improve Mary's reading and math scores on English language tests, as she did with all of the bilingual children in her class.

Volcanoes

Soon everyone was pointing and yelling with a mix of excitement and confusion. The old computer printer at the back of the classroom seemed to have turned on noisily all by itself. Pages printed out and fell to the ground. Mary and her classmates, now deeply curious, wondered out loud, "What is that for?" Suddenly the connecting door to the other first-grade classroom opened, and two students rushed over to the computer printer. The visitors announced that their class was going to make a volcano. Immediately children shouted over one another with enthusiasm.

Mary jumped in with force. "Hey, I want to make a volcano!" Mary's excitement about the volcano was contagious, and almost immediately six-year-old Max and seven-year-old Diana joined in. "I want to make a volcano!" they shouted on top of each other. Now everyone in the class began shouting out volcano facts. Ms. Bailey looked around, taking in the children's excited yelling. They were shaking one another and putting their arms as high in the air as they could go to get her attention. Ms. Bailey was obviously delighted. With a big, showy movement the kids could see, she took the lesson plan sitting in her lap and dropped it on the floor. Then she leaned in toward the children.

"What about volcanoes?" Ms. Bailey asked. "What do you know about them?"

Mary and the other children shouted out so many ideas that Ms. Bailey grabbed a piece of chart paper and started a list of what they knew about volcanoes and what they wanted to find out. "I want to build one!" "They have lava under the earth!" "There are no volcanoes in Texas!"

As the kids yelled out volcano facts, Ms. Bailey looked around at the children and the classroom as if figuring out what to do next. She told the children to go get their clipboards. They ran to their tables, knocking things down in their excitement. They hurried back to the carpet only to realize that it was library time as scheduled by the school. The children and Ms. Bailey talked excitedly about volcanoes as they walked down the wooden walkway to the library. They looked for books about volcanoes in the library, asked the librarian for recommendations, and shared ideas at a relatively high volume inside the library and on the walk back. Mary worked with the librarian to

find two volcano books. Although their pictures and print were small, Mary looked through them at the library, mesmerized.

Back in the classroom, the children sat down at the carpet again and listened as Ms. Bailey shared with them the books she had just found at the library. After showing the class some pictures of volcanoes, she asked them to go draw models of volcanoes and use whatever they knew to explain their model on paper. Students initially followed these directions, but soon they were moving around the room, asking one another questions, getting materials, and asking classmates for ideas. One by one they came and asked Ms. Bailey if they could use some of the books to help them draw models. Then they approached her with sketches. When they did, she asked them questions. To the pencil sketches, she responded, "What color are these?" If a drawing had no label, she asked, "What is this called?" When a drawing was labeled, she asked, "How does this work?"

Students worked on their models for the next three days, referencing the many books from the library as well as online resources that Ms. Bailey found for them. They started copying words out of the books and writing them down on their models. Children got to make decisions about whom they worked by and whom they consulted with about their projects. Some children started out working alone, but all of them ended up in some kind of group. Children spoke Spanish and English words, trying to figure out more about volcanoes, even though instruction was primarily in English. They decided how they wanted to share what they learned with the class.

The "volcano project" was not significant because it was innovative practice. The fields of early childhood education, learning sciences, and developmental psychology have decades of empirical research showing that children learn through moving around, discovery, observation, helping out, collaboration, and exploring in shared endeavors over time with peers and caring adults (Gopnik 2012; Paradise and Rogoff 2009). What is significant about Ms. Bailey's classroom was that she was offering these kinds of practices to Black and Brown children regardless of their behavior, languages, families, or economic situation, in a classroom governed by state standards and testing pressures. Unlike most children of color in the US schooling system, the children in her class did not have to "earn" these experiences.

In this chapter we look at the experiences young children got to have in Ms. Bailey's classroom. These dynamic, active, and agency-supportive learning experiences reflected both an operationalization of agency and an allowance for embodied learning. The mostly Latinx and African American children got to enact their agency in the classroom often and in many different forms. They got to move around, talk to one another often, and use their

initiative because they had the space and time to do so. Sometimes they got to choose their topics of study. They made lots of decisions about what and how they learned. The opportunities to move around, talk to one another, notice new things, contribute effort, and share ideas led to a range of developed and practiced capabilities across social and academic domains. These opportunities were justified and motivated by Ms. Bailey's belief that children need to own what they are doing so that they can be empowered learners throughout their lives.

"Own What You Are Doing" as Pedagogy

When we asked Ms. Bailey why she let children direct so much of their learning, she usually framed these opportunities as ways to help children "own what they are doing." Children's moving around, talking to one another, observing what classmates were working on, and making decisions about how and what they learned were all part of Ms. Bailey's concept of "own what you are doing." She told us both informally and during our more formal interviews that she wanted children to feel in charge of their learning so they would be empowered. She wanted them to have a say in what they did in class. "Someone does not need to always be in charge of you and give you the answers," she often said to the children. Ms. Bailey believed the children needed to know that they could figure out a range of things including conflict, academic content, procedures, word decoding, and even complicated understandings of why volcanoes erupt.

In many ways the concept of "own what you are doing" was Ms. Bailey's version of agency, her mechanism to remove the personhood–subpersonhood line. "Own what you are doing" was not about compliance or about choosing what the teacher already wanted you to do. It was about children's influencing the academic direction of the classroom with their spontaneous ideas, knowledge, and concerns. This concept of "own what you are doing" is perhaps best illustrated in what happened a few days after the paper flew off the printer and the class got excited about volcanoes.

It happened that parent–teacher conferences took place about one week into the volcano project. Mary's mother told Ms. Bailey how excited Mary was about volcanoes. She asked if Mary could make a volcano at home and bring it to school. Ms. Bailey told her that this was a great idea and to bring the volcano whenever they finished working on it. The parent–teacher conference was on a Friday. The following Monday, Mary arrived at school with a large clay model of her volcano, Sal de Uvas Picot (a Mexican version of Alka-Seltzer), and food dye. Immediately the children gathered around Mary

FIGURE 1. Mary brought the volcano she made at home and led the class discussion about how it worked.

and her volcano, asking questions and begging to be the one to pour ingredients into the volcano. Instead of telling everyone to go back to their seats or shushing the class, Ms. Bailey joined them. "Mary, what did you bring us?" she asked.

Mary started explaining that she had made the volcano with her family at home. She pointed to each element of the volcano model, echoing the knowledge she and her classmates had been learning the previous week. Ms. Bailey ran to get her small flip camera and started filming. Meanwhile, classmates bombarded Mary with questions, so much so that her face turned red. She looked stunned by all the attention.

A good friend of hers, Lorene, argued with her about the color of the food dye that she had brought. "Here's some red dye," Mary explained to the group when someone asked her about the small bottle. "It's pink!" Lorene countered. "No, it's red!" Mary insisted.

Some of Mary's classmates wanted her to get the volcano to erupt with the *sal de uvas* and food coloring. "Are you going to do it right now?" they excitedly wondered. Mary's face shifted from smiley to worried; she seemed unsure of whether she could just go ahead and make it explode. Ms. Bailey nodded reassuringly at her, and then Mary posed a problem to the group, as she had often heard Ms. Bailey do: "But I need water!" Gus, a monolingual English-speaking White American child with curly hair who loved to read and draw, yelled out to Mary and the rest of the group, "I'll go get my water bottle." He ran to his backpack and pulled out an orange metal water bottle. He handed it to Mary, who poured the water into the volcano.

The purple "lava" rose and then flooded over the volcano walls and onto the desk. The children cheered, except for one classmate who disapproved of how much water Mary poured into the other ingredients: "You weren't supposed to pour all of it." Mary again looked around for Ms. Bailey, who was still filming the scene. Ms. Bailey looked back at her and nodded again. Mary smiled shyly and did not say anything. One of Mary's closest friends, Elena, exclaimed, "Oh, what a cute little volcano!" Mary smiled again and looked around at everyone watching her family's volcano. As the purple lava flowed over the side of the volcano, close to the table's edge, some of the children ran to get paper towels and then hovered them over the lava in case it started to flow onto the floor.

Ownership over Learning

When Mary walked into the classroom with the model she made with her family, ownership over what happened, what was learned, and who did the teaching shifted from the teacher to the children. This was not a unique or new experience for the children, because it happened often. The children in Ms. Bailey's class learned quickly that they could lead discussions, projects, and inquiries. The volcano project was early in the year, though, so Mary's glances at Ms. Bailey seemed to be asking, "Are you really OK with this?" "Are you really OK with me leading this whole thing?" "Can I really just pour water into the volcano now?"

Reflecting later on this moment with Mary and the class, Ms. Bailey told us that by picking up the camera to film Mary, she became a classmate too. Her hands were occupied, and so students took up the responsibility to debate with Mary ("It's not red, it's pink!"), to offer suggestions ("Pour the water in!"), to solve problems ("I'll get my water bottle!") and to contribute to the shared experience Mary and her family offered the class through the model volcano.

Ms. Bailey did not rescue Mary from the experience of being challenged about the food dye color, nor did she intervene as Mary got nervous leading the activity. She did not solve the water bottle problem. There were no comments about how the eruption was making a mess, how it might run onto the floor, how it needed to be cleaned up immediately. She didn't even tell the children to get paper towels to clean up the lava. Children noticed the potential for the lava to get on the floor, and they went to get paper towels. The experience was about self-rule not in an individual sense but in a collective childhood sense, with children initiating the volcano topic. This kind of ownership was the overall goal of learning throughout the year.

This ownership extended to ideas as well as academic content. During the volcano project Ms. Bailey talked to the class about their progress. Often these conversations were loud, passionate, and multidirectional. Ms. Bailey's emphasis again was on getting them to own their learning. So, for example, when children brought up a topic related to volcanoes that she had not planned on, she stopped what she was doing and tried to show them that their idea was important. Mary's volcano eruption prompted a lot of conversation over the following days about volcanoes, particularly the types of explosions that volcanoes make.

One day after hearing her classmates shout out about volcanoes exploding and shooting out lava, Celeste, an empathetic student with big brown expressive eyes, dimples, and short black hair usually held back by an orange headband, seemed uncomfortable. Celeste and her two siblings (who attended the same school) spoke Spanish at home with her father from Honduras and her mother from Mexico. She liked to sing and write and draw. Usually eager to comment and to get other children to include her in their play, Celeste, with a sad look on her face, interrupted the enthusiastic discussion by reminding her classmates: "The volcanoes are not in the middle of nowhere. Some people live very close to volcanoes. It can hurt people." She went on to explain that her father is from Honduras and that "there are volcanoes in Honduras."

The children grew quiet. Humanizing the issue of volcanoes was new to the group. Celeste's words, like Mary's, had an immediate and powerful effect. When it was time to go back to their seats and continue working on their volcano models, many children started drawing people into their models, bringing into their work what Celeste had helped them understand.

Embodied Learning

Included in the concept of "own what you are doing" was a recognition that children learn through using their bodies. And in Ms. Bailey's classroom, children were very busy. They moved around a lot. They could see what their peers were working on. They observed one another and joined into one another's work and play. They could show their enthusiasm about a topic and Ms. Bailey would take their interest seriously by finding materials, infrastructure, and space to further their interest. This could mean books, an experiment, or even a unit. Sometimes she would hear the children talk about something a lot and then build curriculum around it. She was not bound by a specific curriculum other than the Daily Five curriculum for literacy (which has elements of children choosing space and materials) and the math curriculum called Investigation. So she made a lot of decisions herself. This sense

of her own teacher agency seemed to have a strong impact on how she could support children's agency in her classroom.

One morning in November, Ms. Bailey and her partner first-grade teacher in the adjoining room—Ms. Leslie—asked their classes to go to the cafeteria instead of heading straight to their classroom. They started a discussion about the differences between humans and other animals and wrote the children's ideas on large pieces of butcher paper. Then they explained to their students that they would have two hours to explore a lot of materials about animals. Their job, Ms. Bailey explained, "was to explore and think." She added, "Because this is what scientists do a lot." The only rules were (1) they always had to be learning and (2) no running. Children hopped up, waited at the door for their teachers to open it, and then walked very, very fast to their classrooms in a wobbly, snakelike formation loosely resembling a line.

Breathless, the children excitedly read aloud the signs on their classroom doors. Ms. Bailey's door read "animal." Ms. Leslie's read "human." Those who opened the human door found a large skeleton standing beside one of the tables with a real-life doctor ready to show the children how reflexes work. A nurse sat at the far table ready to show the children how to check their blood pressure. Books and posters about the human body filled the rest of the available wall and table space in the room. Those who opened the "animal" room were stunned to see surprisingly huge animal bones on all of the tables as well as pictures of hearts and organs of different animals up on the walls.

In the "human" room, Marcela hunched over the nurse's table to watch her measure students' blood pressure and heartbeat. She was as close as she could be without sitting right on her lap. Marcela's black hair was done up in a big ponytail. She wore burgundy glasses with a thin frame that contrasted with her black eyes and long eyelashes. Her parents were both Mexican American; she spoke English and some Spanish at home. Marcela had her own blood pressure taken first but then stayed to watch, seemingly enthralled with how the blood pressure cuff worked. She was usually observant, so her observation skills were not surprising, but her questions were. It was unusual for Marcela to talk or initiate conversation, especially with adults. But now she asked the nurse a lot of questions. "Is the band tight?" "Why do you pump it up?" "How does it stay on there?" "What are the numbers for?" The nurse answered her questions while taking the blood pressure of the other children surrounding her. When there were no more children waiting, Marcela picked up the blood pressure cuff and stethoscope and moved it all around, examining it from all angles. "Can I take this to get the people's blood pressure?" she asked the nurse.

Marcela then marched all over the room taking and recording everyone's

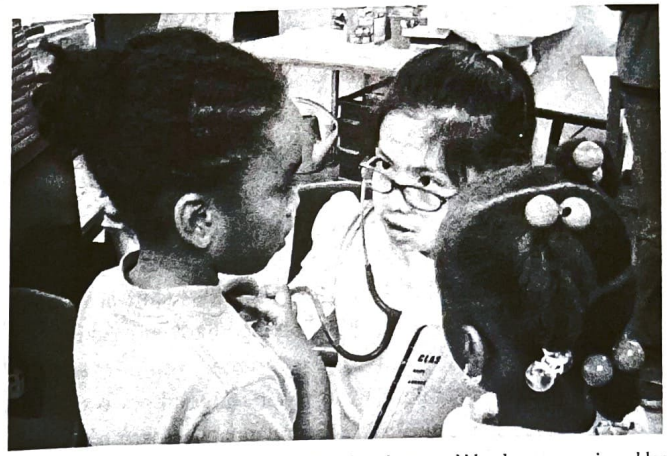

FIGURE 2. Marcela initiated a research study about her classmates' blood pressure using a blood pressure cuff and stethoscope.

blood pressure. She recruited Paloma, who said she was willing to have her arm wrapped in the blood pressure cuff. More classmates volunteered or were happily recruited. After the first few patients, Marcela went to her cubby to get what Ms. Bailey called their "learning logs." In her learning log, Marcela drew lines resembling a table or chart. She made notes in the different boxes with people's names and numbers she read on the blood pressure gauge. When she wrapped the band around each classmate's arm, they asked her questions about blood pressure. Marcela told them what the nurse had told her or guessed when she did not know or could not remember the answer.

Planning for Agency

Children were in charge of whether they stayed and watched something for a long time, moved from one activity to another or observed the room for a while before deciding where to go. Being able to move made a diverse and unpredictable set of learning experiences happen. Marcela stayed and observed the nurse taking everyone's blood pressure. The nurse stayed in her seat instead of following Marcela around the room and reminding her to be careful. Children in the class were willing to stay still and not move to another activity so that Marcela could put the cuff on them. They practiced waiting patiently while she wrote down their numbers on her newly created chart. Ms. Bailey and Ms. Leslie exchanged surprised wide-eyed looks with us and each other all morning. We were collectively stunned by the variety of ways the children had taken up the science content.

Ms. Bailey and Ms. Leslie had set up the classrooms to be enticing. They spread out the materials all over the room. Children had to move in order to engage and follow their interests. Children did not have to resist or rebel to move; teachers allowed them to move around for over two hours. The teachers got to observe and encourage, instead of leading instruction. By watching all of the activity, they learned that Marcela was internalizing math in an organized, applied way that contradicted her benchmark scores. They saw her take content and set up her own experiment—something that surprised them because she had not taken on a leadership role before at school.

At the same time that Marcela was making charts and taking her classmates' blood pressure, Jaime was in the "animal" room, examining large horse bones on one of the tables. He turned the largest bone over and over in his hands. Jaime was Mexican American and a native Spanish speaker whose parents were both immigrants from Mexico and spoke Spanish with him at home. Jaime, along with Elena, was the most vocal Spanish speaker in the class. He had straight black hair that was always combed perfectly and brown eyes that somehow seemed observant and worried at the same time. Jaime asked a lot of questions but rarely took a leadership role during group projects. Sometimes Ms. Bailey lovingly described him as spacy because he often got lost in his thoughts.

The father who had found the large horse bones in a field by his house and brought it to Ms. Bailey was watching from the side. Eventually he walked over to the table and asked Jaime what he was trying to figure out about the bone. Jaime took two bones in his hand, trying to see if they fit together as part of the skeleton. "Do they go like this?" he asked. Without waiting for an answer, Jaime started asking the dad a lot of questions about the bones. "Where did you find them?" "How did you clean them?" "Is this the arm bone?" "Why is this hole in the bone?" The visiting dad answered as much as he could, even as Jaime started trying to stack a few of the bones to make them fit together. Sometimes the dad would tell Jaime that his question was a good one but that he didn't know the answer. Eventually Jaime put his head through the largest bone and figured out that it was the pelvic bone. "A butt bone! A butt bone!" he exclaimed to himself. The dad stepped back to the periphery as Jaime recruited classmates nearby to come see.

Seeing that Jaime was able to put his head through the bone got other children interested. Soon there was a curious group at the table asking a lot of questions. Jaime, using the knowledge he'd gotten from the dad and some he brought from home, started answering their questions. Jaime did not tell them it was the pelvic bone and was elated when someone in the new group figured it out on their own. After a few minutes, Jaime wandered

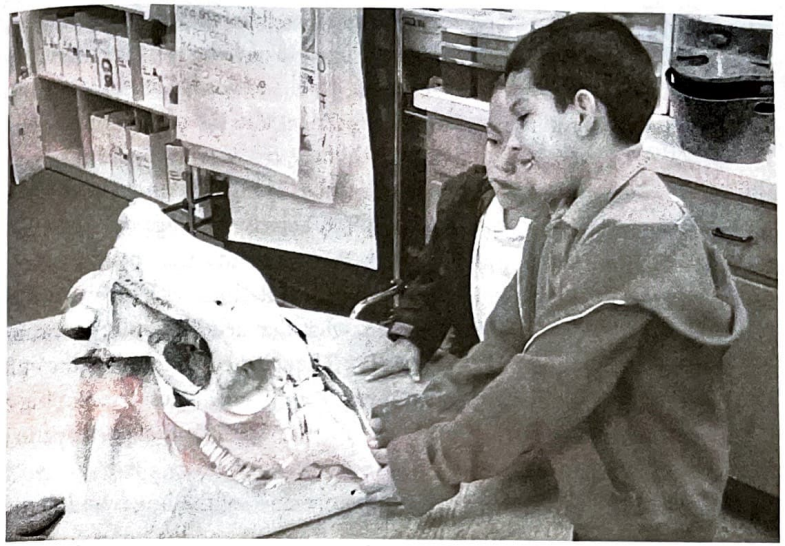

FIGURE 3. Jaime examined bones as part of a large class project and then taught classmates what he found out.

off to explore other areas of the two classrooms. Three of the boys stayed, waiting for other kids to come to the table. When they did, the boys answered their questions just as Jaime had done for them and the dad had done for Jaime. This went on for almost forty uninterrupted minutes: kids asking questions, learning about the bones, and then teaching the kids who arrived next at the table.

Adults had planned for these young children to have a variety of (and make decisions about) entry points into the content. Rather than leave children to their own devices, adults facilitated collective agency and gave the children important information, encouragement, and challenge. The nurse with the blood pressure cuff inspired and then supported Marcela. The dad who brought the bones provided information to Jaime. This was just one example of how Ms. Bailey and Ms. Leslie often put together activities, assignments, and lessons in which they determined the content and context but allowed for authentic decision-making. Adults were sources of information, but they did not make all of the decisions. Children made lots of decisions.

Building Relationships through Materials and Movement

Marcela and Jaime developed a deeper intellectual understanding of blood pressure and bones, respectively. The willingness and availability of the adult

resources in the room made this learning possible. Children's agency, in Ms. Bailey's classroom, depended on the agentic environment surrounding them. The environment was an active part of the knowledge-making process in Ms. Bailey's classroom. Freedom of movement and the unstructured connection with their environment helped children connect and form relationships with the materials that mattered to them. Their relationships with the materials seemed meaningful to the children because they appreciated what the materials were offering them. Before Marcela and Jaime brought their learning to others in the classroom, they spent time alone with the materials, getting to know them, how they worked, what they felt like, and the meaning of their physical and practical features. They turned and moved the cuff and bones in their hands, looking at them from many angles. Developing a relationship with the materials preceded the material's eventual participation in helping children build relationships with one another.

In both Marcela's and Jaime's case, the presence of the bones and blood pressure cuff enabled relationship building. The cuff and the bones fostered interaction among the children. Marcela and Jaime welcomed children to see the materials and how they were interacting with them. For Marcela, the blood pressure cuff and stethoscope created a relationship between her and the nurse as she watched how the nurse used the cuff to measure blood pressure. The nurse seemed proud of Marcela and connected with her though touching her arm, smiling, and making eye contact. For Jaime, the bones offered a relationship as he turned them in his hands, touched them, and moved them in order to welcome others to share in his connection with the bones.

Materials used to build relationships are what Ananda Marin and Megan Bang (2018) refer to as *semiotic resources*. They define semiotic resources as "those material artifacts, ideas, and actions people both perceive and create to engage in interaction" (89). Semiotic resources are both a part of learning and a way to create relationships that also impact learning. For example, after Marcela watched the nurse take the blood pressure, she asked to use the cuff. After trying out the cuff, she asked Paloma if she could take her blood pressure. When she got a number, she went and got her "learning log" book and wrote out a graph. Perhaps this graph reflected how Marcela had learned to record numbers. It could also have been anticipatory, because Marcela made several lines as if hoping that she could take the blood pressure of many classmates. With her notebook, pen, and cuff, Marcela moved throughout the room approaching classmates to take and record their blood pressure. Sometimes we could see Marcela gently patting the blood pressure cuff while someone else was holding it.

These young children related to materials and the environment in ways that asserted their own agency and ultimately engaged in collective relationships and sophisticated knowledge development that as Fikile Nxumalo (2017; 2019) explains, counter colonial and capitalistic assertions that the environment is passive or disconnected from them. Being able to move and connect with materials in ways the children controlled enabled a depth of learning that included and was made possible through the presence and insight of the materials (see Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, and Kocher 2016). The materials were not static to the young children; they were active and engaging and important to learning and feeling good.

Giving Over Some Control

Through the concepts of "own what you are doing" and "embodied learning," Ms. Bailey gave the children in her classroom some control over the how, what, when, where, and why of their learning. Giving up control resulted in specific kinds of learning experiences that became everyday, normalized parts of the day, including noise, movement, time, and collective work.

NOISE

The noise children made in Ms. Bailey's classroom comprised discussion, chatting, arguments, stories, and questions. There was a lot of talk and a range of emotional expressions, including sighs of frustration, yelps of excitement, grunts of anger, and sounds meant to encourage empathy, inclusion, cooperation, and sometimes submission. Children used noise to be social and to engage one another. They talked their way through complicated topics. They motivated one another verbally to keep going even when a task was difficult to complete.

Many forms of noise were both intellectual and academic. Being able to make noise in the classroom offered children many ways to interact with the content and with one another's knowledge. They reminded one another of the rules. They objected and argued over materials and about ideas. They debated whether a word was pronounced a certain way or which numbers added up to ten. They used both Spanish and English words. They asked questions out loud to one another and to themselves. Often children used spontaneous and loud noises to gather one another for the sake of learning. Children would call out to each other that they were learning something, were about to learn something, or had just learned something. "I found a rainbow!" "I'm going to see if the ice melts." "The wet spot on the table is disappearing because it

is so hot!" When Ms. Bailey responded to the volcano excitement with enthusiasm rather than discipline, children began to accept that calling out was permissible, even desirable. They tried it out more and more, until eventually calling out about learning became a type of intellectual alert.

Ms. Bailey came to see noise as a sign of her students' readiness as well as an indicator of their willingness, enthusiasm, and interest. In her class all students, regardless of their language dominance, participated all the time. Noise was a price to pay for peer engagement and authentic conversations. Even as the school made efforts to make Ms. Bailey's classroom quieter, she continued to engage in pedagogies that encouraged participation and noisy spontaneity. Interpreting noise as a signal that learning was going to happen goes against most of the early childhood classroom behaviorist models currently used in the US, which insist on quiet as a sign of readiness to learn.

Ms. Bailey cited both developmental and equity arguments for a noisier-than-usual classroom. Multiple forms of noise used in pursuit of academic and social development are extensions of children's early development. Children begin by mimicking sounds and matching emotion to the ways in which other children and adults interact with them (Leavitt 1994). Robin Lynn Leavitt's groundbreaking work on power and emotion in infant and child care centers found that the impact of emotional interactions between infants and toddlers and caretakers depended on "a respect for children as active, emotional subjects" and a "responsiveness to their efforts to communicate" (70). Children have a variety of communicative skills and strategies to use, depending on the types of practices in their families and communities (Gutiérrez 2002). Children can move back and forth between languages, dialects, and jargon, depending on the worlds they are trying to participate in and understand (Fránquiz and Reyes 1998; Worthy et al. 2013). Being able to use "hybrid language practices" allows for successful collaborative learning experiences for children (Gutiérrez et al. 1999). Early childhood scholars have written about the strong need to support peer conversation and discussion that is not bound by strict linguistic tasks and structures. The work of Celia Genishi and Anne Haas Dyson (2009) in first-grade and kindergarten classes found that young multilingual children develop sophisticated literacies through varying timelines and varied types of creative interactions with their peers and teachers. Multimodal ways of communicating—including talk and a range of noise—are also about pleasure, ways for children to communicate what they desire and to act in ways that bring them enjoyment (Tobin 1997).

Supporting children's conversations in the language of their choosing demonstrated how Ms. Bailey valued translanguaging as part of teaching and learning in her classroom (García and Wei 2014). She valued children's

home languages and the right of children to choose and use their home language in the classroom even when the class was taught primarily in English (Colegrove and Zuñiga 2018). During one of our interviews, she recalled telling Jaime, "When you speak Spanish, that's powerful! That's awesome! There are so many of your friends that only know one language. You are a rock star! You're working on your second language and you're only six!" (teacher interview, January 2017). In Ms. Bailey's class children used sophisticated linguistic strategies as they navigated their multilingual spaces. Such sophistication is described in the work of Marjorie Orellana as brokering language practices (Orellana 2016, 93). Children employed sophisticated ways of expressing themselves: translating content between Spanish and English, clarifying instructions, reading for each other, figuring out the meaning of a word, sounding out an unknown word, or helping spell out while writing.

Ms. Bailey did discipline or control some types of noise if they worked against a cohesive classroom community. Noise could be disruptive, distracting, and rude. Sometimes comments or side conversations could be mean or so off-topic that they broke the flow of learning and engagement. Children used noise to make fun of one another. They spoke loudly to take over a conversation as a way to control situations they didn't agree with or like. The children in Ms. Bailey's class did not scream that year, nor did they get verbally aggressive, but they did talk over one another sometimes and cried openly when they couldn't get someone's attention with their presence or voice. These types of noise concerned Ms. Bailey, and she did her best to talk to the children about listening carefully to one another.

MOVEMENT

Seeing children move around Ms. Bailey's classroom was fascinating to us, because we had never been to a classroom serving children of color that enabled so much movement. We were used to highly controlled environments where silence and stillness was equated with learning. In Ms. Bailey's class, however, children moved to learn. Children's moving was equated with making decisions toward learning new things. Children's moving around was not interpreted as distracting or avoiding work, nor was it normally seen as deviant. For example, children would get up from their seat without permission to observe a classmate's work, ask someone a question, lend a hand to someone struggling, or act on an intellectual idea.

Children in Ms. Bailey's classroom could move their bodies. They were able to make a lot of decisions about their bodies. Their bodies were not constantly ordered and assessed as we had often seen happen in other early

childhood classrooms serving children of color. They were not constantly told to look at their bodies and make sure they were standing straight or sitting cross-legged or "criss-cross applesauce" or walking with their hands at their sides or listening with their mouths closed as if they had bubbles in them. Children sat on the rug in a variety of positions. They meandered to their seats and got up from their seats when others called out about something interesting. Sometimes they braided one another's hair or stroked the ground or lightly patted their legs while listening to a story.

While certainly there is cultural variance to the types of order and control imposed at school, the control of children's bodies throughout the day across almost all activities (lunch, walking in the hallway, sitting to hear a story, walking to the bathroom, sitting at a table, waiting in line, listening on the rug) is often unrelenting for young children of color in the US (Milner et al. 2019). In the developmental sciences, *self-control* and *self-regulation* are common terms that claim to assess the extent to which children are in control of their bodies (Boldt 2001). And yet these terms also justify harsh control protocols when children are not able or do not want to match the desired limitations of movement or strict body positions required by teachers or reported as optimal. Kyunghwa Lee (2017) critiques the use of self-control and self-regulation as a way to assess young children operating and being assessed within racially biased and adult-centered systems. Lee's research shows that when young children of color are assessed as not having enough "self-regulation," teachers use more restraints and behavior modifications. This is the equivalent of someone not playing piano well and the punishment being a severe limit on practicing piano. When children cannot "self-regulate," teachers may take away their recess, play, interactions with classmates, and ability to participate in learning. Essentially, Lee explains, when children are asked to use their self-control, they are usually being required to do what *teachers* want them to do instead of being permitted to use their bodies to learn in ways that make sense to them.

Not allowing children to move and control their own bodies forestalls a range of cognitive and academic development. Recent work into active and embodied learning suggests that children learn more and more deeply (lastingly) when they are moving rather than static (Fusaro and Smith 2018; Vredenburgh and Kushnir 2016). And yet as Gail Boldt (2020) points out, "The ongoing devaluing of the bodies of marginalized and minoritized students means that their embodiment, instead of being understood as an occasion for interpersonal connection and energetic participation, is often pathologized and punished" (2020, 4).

The desire of young children of color to move their bodies keeps being

interpreted and punished through old lenses of racism and White supremacy. If children of color want to move a lot, they are often assessed through discourses and expectations set up and maintained by (mostly White) administrators and policymakers who are, like the institutions they serve, blinded by a White supremacist's intuition to control and be in charge of Black and Brown bodies. Just at the time between three and eight years old when children are learning who they are in relation to the larger society—outside of their immediate families and neighborhoods—they receive the message that they cannot control their bodies safely and no one trusts them enough to let them try. This doesn't lead to disciplined and obedient children. This leads to angry, underperforming, and distrustful children (Gay 2000). Such a control of movement can be harmful and embolden stereotypes. Ann Arnett Ferguson's (2000) powerful ethnographic study of young Black male masculinity in schools describes two tracks, one for students to become "doctors, scientists, engineers" and another that leads to prison. She tells the story of an adult who was showing her through a school. He pointed to one child, "a ten-year-old, barely four feet tall whose frail body was shrouded in baggy pants and a hooded sweatshirt," and said, "That one has a jail-cell with his name on it" (Ferguson 2000, 1). For young children these pathways are not necessarily overt, but they are suggestive of the ongoing school-to-prison pipeline running through the US school system (Robinson 2013). Controlling children's movement, even just forcing children to walk in lines with their hands behind their backs, is reminiscent of prisons, not of intellectual centers that position children of color as smart and capable.

TIME

We never heard Ms. Bailey tell the children to hurry. She did not rush her class or say "Hurry up!," a phrase used often in classrooms we visited before, during, and after this study. Sometimes Ms. Bailey was tired or stressed or sick or annoyed (she is a normal human being), but she never rushed. She did not stress time. She did not count down from ten. She did not give five-minute warnings. She did not tell children she was waiting for them. She would say, "OK, it's time for Daily Five." Or "It's time for recess; let's line up." And children meandered to whatever Ms. Bailey said it was time for. Children were not efficient movers from their desks and chairs to the carpet or to line up at the door. They took their time, chatting along the way. Ms. Bailey did too.

There was a routine and a posted schedule in Ms. Bailey's class. There was definitely a general timeframe for the Daily Five, for math and for proj-

ect learning as well as for the art, music, and physical education classes they called "specials." And yet the schedule frequently shifted. Time flexibility was characteristic of the classroom space. This flexibility made it possible for young children in the class to have some influence over time. This worked two ways. First, Ms. Bailey often built in large amounts of time for experiments, projects, and other open-ended, process-heavy activities. Instead of breaking up the day into fifteen- or thirty-minute segments, Ms. Bailey allowed the children an hour or hour and a half to work on projects. This large amount of time was welcomed by the children, who could go slow or work with friends or try multiple experiments to get something to work. The long stretches of time allowed many possibilities for learning and leadership. Second, when children were deeply engaged in a learning activity or just about to figure something out, Ms. Bailey tried to extend time for them. She rarely interrupted such an experience. Many times we saw her announce it was time to line up for lunch, only to notice a group deeply debating or actively constructing or discussing something. She would watch them admiringly, waiting to see a good stopping point. This kind of engaged ownership of learning was her main goal for children in her class. And she really enjoyed watching children in such an engaged state.

In many classrooms routine is prioritized over children's interests. Children need to expand their range of learning capabilities; however, this is not usually prioritized. We see teachers frequently tell children to be quiet when they are sharing significant details about their lives with peers—because it is time for science or phonics or social emotional learning (SEL). We have seen teachers tell immigrant parents they cannot share a story with the class for a holiday or special family occasion because music class or a benchmark test or math activities are scheduled at that time. Children are often interrupted by adults telling them that it is time to move on from what they are doing. This emphasis on routine fits nicely with an ideology of efficiency. The faster the better. Staying on task. Ironically, we are not sure that this has created a more efficient child.

Sometimes the children in Ms. Bailey's classroom were given almost complete control over their time. The human–animal project—which lasted for over three hours—is a good example. Marcela used her time to observe, wander around, and recruit others to participate in her blood pressure study. Children also found hidden or unofficial time in the interstices of the schedule: getting in line, waiting for the teacher at circle time, playing math games, getting materials out, cleaning up, organizing supplies, walking in the hallways, writing in morning journals, or while Ms. Bailey spoke with a parent or other teachers who had a question. Children found lots of space to talk.

The different inquiries (such as the volcano project) that lasted over days and weeks were elongated in part because children kept their conversation about them going in these pockets of time. They followed up on previous conversations. They wondered aloud together about what might happen tomorrow with the ice or where the bones went when they left the class or what happened to Ms. Bailey's crashed car or how they could build a better volcano the following day. Children had a lot to talk about because their talk and movement toward one another was not constantly controlled.

The power in Ms. Bailey's approach to time was that children had consistent access to time to pursue what they desired. Many times a day children needed to focus, follow directions, and complete specific tasks, yet they had time throughout each day to pursue a conversation with a friend or an activity they were interested in without being reprimanded. This meant that children did not need to resist so much, because they had some (even if limited) time to pursue their interests each day. They could chat or share or walk or listen or observe without reprimand. In this way they could control (some) time.

Children had some influence over how much time they spent on academic things. They got excited about certain topics and then asked to form a project group or study the topic as a class. They influenced others with their support, enthusiasm, and participation. They influenced some of the academic topics that were covered during the year and how long they spent on them. Conversations Ms. Bailey planned to have for fifteen minutes would turn into inquiry projects that lasted days and weeks. Ms. Bailey had not planned on many of the projects children talked about nonstop over a number of weeks: Volcanoes. The Obamas. Bones. Blood pressure. Reflexes. Ice. Rainbows.

THE RAINBOW PROJECT

In early January, Samuel and Charlie walked into the classroom and noticed light shining down through the fish tank. "Oh, a rainbow!" they shouted, surprised and wide eyed. The boys ran over together and put their hands through the rainbow, letting the colors run over their hands, arms, and faces. They looked up, trying to figure out how the rainbow happened. Samuel was one of the smallest and youngest children in the class but managed to be friends with almost everyone. He had very short black hair. His parents were Mexican American and spoke a mixture of Spanish and English at home. He felt comfortable offering ideas and listening to his classmates, and most were happy to have him in their groups during project time. Charlie, one of the few White children in the class, had blond hair, blue eyes, and an energetic

way of interacting. He also happened to be the tallest and oldest child in the class. Charlie talked a lot and shared many stories and facts about his life and, with varied success, tried often to give information and help to his classmates.

When Samuel and Charlie looked up to examine the origins of the rainbow, they saw that it had streamed through the tank itself. Immediately they tried to figure out how to stop and restart the rainbow by blocking the light. They moved books in front of the tank. They moved posters on the wall. They stood in front of where the light was shining through the tank, attempting to block it with their bodies. Still the rainbow persisted.

Pablo noticed the activity at the fish tank. Pablo was curious and very popular in the class. He was short with buzz-cut brown hair and large brown eyes that seemed to always be searching for the next fun thing to do. Pablo was confident and a little bit *travieso*—witty, playful, and always up to something interesting. His parents were Mexican American and he lived with his mom, who spoke a mixture of Spanish and English with him at home. He understood Spanish and spoke some words with Jaime and others in the class. Along with Mary, he had been a major proponent of the volcano project. After watching Samuel and Charlie for a second, Pablo ran over to open and shut the bathroom door to see if he could block the sun.

Watching the scientific scene unfold and perhaps being a little annoyed at the door repeatedly being open and shut, Ms. Bailey asked Pablo, "Why are you doing that?" Pablo looked up at her: "Well, I just wanted to see if the wood, the door, was gonna stop the rainbow." Ms. Bailey sighed and smiled. She congratulated him on a really good question. "I'm wondering the same thing," she admitted. She stayed with them for a few more seconds. Then she turned to the class and reminded everyone to get out their journals and write down the date. The boys, though, did not go get their journals. They were still trying to figure out the rainbow.

Eventually the three boys collectively marched over to Ms. Bailey to ask if they could create a "rainbow group." Over the previous few weeks students had been asking to create their own project groups. Ms. Bailey had introduced the idea, and it had taken a few days for students to get ideas and form groups. They had project time almost every day. Some students who had not formed groups wandered around the classroom watching what other groups were doing. Sometimes groups lasted a day or two, sometimes only an hour. Nia, Lorene, and Diana—the three Black girls in the class—wanted to study President Obama's daughters and what their lives were like in the White House. The three girls did not usually work together on projects, but on their own, they decided they wanted to do this one together. Lorene had started the project with her desire to share facts and ask lots of questions about President Obama's family. Lorene was a bright and active student who participated in most class discussions and was excited about learning, no matter the topic. Lorene was almost like a teacher herself, reminding her classmates to sit down, listen, complete their work, and figure out solutions to difficult assignments. Her parents were African American, and she lived mostly with her mother, who was an educator herself. Lorene always wore earrings and had her hair in perfectly combed braids. She was almost always deeply engaged in whatever the class was working on and never seemed to be in a bad mood. She sought out books with Black characters and was best friends with Nia. When she found pictures of Malia and Sasha Obama on the computer or in books, she would often say, "I could have been them!" The Obama family group had already lasted two weeks and would continue for another until they presented their findings. When the girls worked together, Lorene kept them on task and engaged with more and more books, videos, and facts she brought from home.

The boys had seen projects like the one Lorene led about the Obama family happen all throughout the class, so they knew what to do next. They knew that Ms. Bailey would ask them at least one of the typical questions she always asked of newly formed project groups, such as "What is the purpose of your group?" and "What do you need to research your topic?" The boys told Ms. Bailey that their group was going to try to "redo a rainbow." Ms. Bailey nodded and asked what materials they would need to work on their project. The boys didn't know. They looked at the computers, then back at Ms. Bailey, searching for a signal from her that it was OK to go over there and research. She looked at them smiling, seemingly impressed with their interest and initiative. Her pleasure and impressed face seemed to be the sign they were looking for. They walked quickly to the computer and started looking up "rainbow" and "make a rainbow." After a few minutes, Charlie came back to Ms. Bailey and asked for a cup to make a rainbow. She told him that she would bring it the next day and instructed the three boys to get their journals and join in what the rest of the class was doing.

The next day, Ms. Bailey brought a plastic cup to school for Charlie, Samuel, and Pablo. During project time, the newly formed research group moved the cup in, through, and over different angles in front of the window. It didn't work, though—no rainbows appeared. The boys huddled up to determine what went wrong. They tried making light with a lamp. They tried to find spots where the sunlight was shining in the window. Soon they wondered if they needed a glass cup instead of a plastic one. The fish tank was glass, so maybe their cup needed to be glass too. They looked around the room and noticed the glass jar that held the classroom's now defunct marble

reward system. They ran over to the jar, emptied the marbles, and tried their experiment again.

Over the next few weeks during project time, the three boys and a steady stream of curious but temporary group members tried different ways to make rainbows. Some days, when they managed to get some colors shining through different kinds of glass from different angles inside and outside the classroom, they announced their success to the class. Children dropped what they were doing and came over to see. On other days the boys came up short. They would yell out to the class that they had a rainbow, but when everyone ran over, the rainbow would already be gone and the boys couldn't get it back. This didn't sour everyone in the class, though. New announcements still drew everyone over to see a possible rainbow.

The class's excitement and support for the boys' rainbow attempts illustrate how children in Ms. Bailey's classroom influenced and made decisions about their learning collectively. They had time to pursue their interests. The boys chose their topic of study and influenced how long they got to spend on it. They chose to work with one another, although they were not technically allowed to refuse someone who wanted to join in with their group. They determined how they learned about rainbows and what materials (among those available) they would use. They influenced the flow of the day with their interest because it took them longer to join in with the big group, or to get quiet because they kept talking about the rainbow, especially for the first few days. Yet they did follow the routines. And the teacher made space each day for them to work on and talk through their interests with one another.

Agency or the process of owning what you are doing in Ms. Bailey's classroom meant influencing and making decisions in order to develop. Children had a role in determining what kinds of development or capabilities they expanded. If children really wanted to learn about a particular topic, they trusted there would be time and opportunity to pursue it. They had project time almost every day. They could discuss and talk often about their ideas with their classmates without being shushed. They could move around to watch one another, get materials, and work in appropriate areas of the room. And they had time to work, time that they controlled.

When the boys saw the rainbow and went right over to start experimenting, they put in motion a collective agentic act. The rainbow project was a learning opportunity that was fueled by their interest as well as the time to pursue it. As Carolyn Goodman Turkanis, a teacher-scholar who created curriculum with young children, explains, "Time is an important element. Does the classroom provide time for kids to relax and enjoy? To be kids? To ask

questions and explore their own interests? To learn at their own pace? To be with each other in learning and in friendship? Time to create? . . . Time to change directions, reflect, to resolve?" (in Rogoff, Turkanis, and Bartlett 2001, 100). This ability to pursue an interest was made possible by Ms. Bailey's willingness to engage in what Susan Jurow and Laura Creighton label as "improvisational teaching" that is "purposeful, but not predetermined" (2005, 276).

COLLECTIVE WORK

When children had the opportunity to influence and make decisions in the classroom, they almost always acted collectively. The decisions children made were almost always communal. Pablo could have acted alone to figure out the door blocking the light. Samuel and Charlie could have noted the rainbow but kept it to themselves. The teacher could have asked them to wait and do a project on rainbows in the future, at a more convenient time. The teachers could have noted their interest and created a fun, hands-on lesson about light, prisms, and rainbows. Instead the scene unfolded in a way that was "natural" to the space. The boys knew that they had at least a few minutes right then to follow their curiosity and develop an inquiry project as a group. And although they anticipated that they would have many whole group lessons where they were required to pay attention and listen quietly to the teacher, they also trusted that later in the day they would have time to pursue the topic further with little restriction.

Children in Ms. Bailey's classroom knew they could announce ideas, move to participate, and take extra time to follow their interests. They almost always chose to use their agency collectively. They welcomed and joined in their classmates' pursuits, which then became shared endeavors. The children in Ms. Bailey's class responded to being encouraged to be agentic in their learning by working, acting, experimenting, discussing, and problem solving in groups. Children watched one another carefully, for a number of minutes sometimes, to see what others were working on. This happened when Marcela initiated a blood pressure experiment and when Mary brought in her volcano and allowed her classmates to join the inquiry. When children shared new information that they had figured out or when they wanted to try out an experiment, they made announcements, much like the boys did with the rainbow. Children responded to one another's excitement and learning. Even during brief moments of getting ready for circle time on the carpet, children enacted their agency most often in ways that engaged, supported, and expanded one another's capabilities.

Ms. Bailey described her allowances for children to have time, move around, share stories, make decisions, and work together as an effort to provide a classroom experience that was as "unprisonlike" as possible. The desire to "unprison" her classroom arose from her own school experiences. She wanted the children in her classroom to own what they were doing and to embody their learning because she had experienced classrooms that were like prison and others that were more like the one she was trying to create.

As the daughter of a diplomat, Ms. Bailey attended schools in different countries. When she was three years old her family moved from France to Cameroon, the homeland of the Baka (Pygmies) as well as the Bantu, who three to four thousand years ago moved throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, resulting in hundreds of Bantu languages. When Ms. Bailey arrived as a young child, Cameroon's educational system was in what continues to be the complex aftermath of colonization and European manipulation. Her school was conducted in French because it was in the area of Cameroon invaded and controlled by France. Independent by 1960, the country had set educational policy in the 1970s reflecting a struggle to reconcile warring linguistic powers and pedagogies between French and English (Esch 2012). Despite many hundreds of languages, cultures, peoples, and learning approaches across a diverse Cameroon, schools were forced to teach with little agency over resources, under instruction from colonial powers. Schools could not reflect local belief systems or pedagogies (Kuchah 2016). Schools were stressful and controlling, as if mirroring the colonial conditions that created them. The result, Ms. Bailey told us, was prisonlike conditions passed on to children.

> For three years at that school, we could not move. It was like a prison. Even as preschoolers, we had to sit behind rows of desks, and the class sizes were very large. I remember the teacher [for three-year-olds] being very stern and intimidating. We were all scared of her. It was so bad that I would wet myself on my chair because I wasn't allowed to just go to the bathroom. It was awful. When I think back now, my teachers were probably doing the best that they could given the resources they had and the expectations that were imposed on them. I remember another teacher who was tough but warm, comforting me while trying to get me to toughen up.

After a couple of years, Ms. Bailey attended another school, also in Cameroon, that was very different from a prison.

> I moved and went to a Canadian school which was the opposite of that. Kids were very free to explore and move around. I was no longer sitting behind a desk, learning to be quiet and do as I was told by my teacher. Instead I got to play for most of the day, could choose to sew, knit, animate puppets, plant in the gardens, and talk with other children in the classroom without being reprimanded. It was a private, progressive White school. However, I remained very introverted not only because of the "cultural shock" in expectation but also because of the drastic change in the composition of my classroom, which [had gone from] all Black students and teachers to almost all White students and teachers.

The difference between the schools was not simply pedagogical or curricular but also racial and economic. Ms. Bailey went from a school serving mostly Black students where she could not move at all to a school serving White students in which she was free to move around and explore. She remembered feeling very stressed, embarrassed, and scared in the restrictive school where all of her movements were controlled and had to be performed in the exact way the teacher dictated. And although she loved the schooling environment of the second school, she felt somewhat out of place as one of the only Black students. She told us that this experience of moving schools and seeing how Black and White students were offered such dramatically different learning experiences inspired her teaching. As she put it, "I learned early on that schools were not equal and that children could have very different experiences depending on where they went to school." Part of her motivation to offer the children of color in her classroom opportunities to enact their agency came from her own early learning experiences.

Expanded Capabilities

Children demonstrated a range of capabilities in Ms. Bailey's classroom. We watched children expand what they were capable of because they were encouraged to own what they were doing, embody their learning, and work collectively. During the school year, we observed and recorded every moment of children's influencing and making decisions about their learning that we could. It was obvious to us that children enacted their agency collectively—to be with one another. It also became obvious that children of color in Ms. Bailey's classroom regularly demonstrated capabilities that countered "culture of poverty" racist stereotypes propped up by Whiteness and White supremacy (see Gorski 2008 and Redeanx 2011 for critiques of the culture of poverty discourse). The capabilities we saw demonstrated on a regular basis in Ms. Bailey's classroom included the capability to (1) build community, (2) observe, (3) engage in intellectual discussions, (4) deeply pursue knowledge, (5) curiously approach new topics, (6) listen, and (7) fail without giving

up. We now believe that when children do not exhibit these capabilities, it is because they were not allowed the types of agentic experiences that lead to them, not because of a deficit in the child or the family's economic circumstances. Agency, as Sen (2003) explains, is a requisite for expanding capabilities (see also Adair 2014). Without agency, capabilities cannot expand as much. We saw this theoretical argument play out each day we spent in Ms. Bailey's classroom. For each of the capabilities demonstrated regularly by children in Ms. Bailey's classroom, we offer examples and suggest how these capabilities were strengthened throughout everyday opportunities to enact agency.

CAPABILITY: BUILD COMMUNITY

In Ms. Bailey's class, children got to know who was good at what. And they had many opportunities to act on that knowledge by asking certain peers to help with projects, research, writing, drawing, or settling disputes. Being able to choose partners did not mean that children chose the same people. At first they did. Pablo always worked with Jason, for example, until he learned that Mary loved volcanoes as much as he did. Marcela and Elena always worked together at the beginning of the year because they were friends in and outside of school. But later Marcela and Celeste found that they shared interests in singing and math. So they worked together on some projects. All of the children could move around and get information from a range of their peers, and they had time to listen and talk to one another about intellectual things.

Over the first few months they came to recognize the particular contributions each student made to their classroom. Celeste was the one who could draw. Max could fold paper and was good at ideas. Elena was a good listener. Paloma could write really well. Nia could read. Peter was good at helping out during projects and asking questions. Mary was good at science. After a few months they also recognized who might need more support to participate, who was shy, or who was too dominant. They learned who was good at teaching them new skills and who would listen carefully to their problems. Ms. Bailey told us that children's learning about one another as potential experts and unique personalities took time and involved some conflict as they started working together.

MS. BAILEY: Sometimes it's painful, because they have to disagree. But they do it on their own. It used to be a nightmare.

JENN: How was it a nightmare? Would they just argue and not get anything done? Were they coming up to you all the time?

MS. BAILEY: All the time! "Ms. Bailey, he won't let me draw on this side of the paper." "Ms. Bailey, he doesn't want me to be part of the group." "Ms. Bailey, he took so and so." Just every little thing . . . they came to me to figure out the problem. But I said, "Figure it out!"

Children got to know one another because Ms. Bailey refused to embody all of the strengths they might need. And she gave them time to work together so that they had to work through differences without her constant intervention.

CAPABILITY: OBSERVE

Children seemed to want a social environment in which they could watch what others were doing and then join in the action (Alcalá et al. 2014; Mejía-Arauz 2015). Children observed one another often, moving around to watch and then participate. When children noticed something interesting that their classmates were drawing or writing, they would walk over or get closer to observe them. Children observed how their classmates interpreted a particular instruction, direction, activity, or lesson. Children often changed their minds about their own projects after they observed what other groups were doing. Being able to look around while feeling curious, interested, or conflicted motivated children to engage, seek out new information, and have informative conversations. Ms. Bailey explained observation as "floating around" to see what they got excited about.

> Could be a question, it could be a contribution, it could just be watching and listening, because I do have a couple of students that every time their friends want to start working on projects they're anxious and they start melting down and they're like "I don't know, I don't know what I'm interested in, and I'm frustrated." Sometimes you can ask them and try to guide them, and sometimes it's better to just let them be and let them float around and eventually get excited about something.

One morning Diana dropped some objects into an ice-cube tray and filled it with water. Diana was a tall biracial Black girl with long wavy hair usually pulled into a ponytail. She spoke English at home and was trying to learn Spanish so she could speak it with Elena, her closest friend in the class. Her classmates looked to her often for ideas and leadership because she was an outgoing, engaging, inquisitive student who liked to solve problems and be in charge. During the previous few weeks, the class had been learning about how matter can change from a liquid to a solid. Diana wanted to try it out with ordinary objects, wondering if the object and the water would freeze,

or just the water. She put the tray into the freezer and kept checking on it throughout the morning. Sometimes she shook or wiggled the ice tray to see whether it was frozen yet. Diana loved to teach her peers, so she explained her process to various groups of classmates who followed her over to the freezer. She predicted out loud that the objects would stay solid and not change shape even though the water was changing into a solid. Students' observations turned into many similar freezing projects over the next few days. Soon everyone understood the states of matter, and particularly that water can change from a gas to a solid.

Observation is a way both to learn and to participate. Marin and Bang show that observation is a way to be in the world that enables relationship building (2018, 92). Rogoff and the Learning through Observation and Pitching-In (LOPI) research collective (Rogoff, Najafi, and Mejía-Arauz 2014) conceptualize observation as a key part of young children's learning within indigenous communities in Latin America. They have documented that for many communities, learning is done through observation and participation, much more than didactic instruction from adult to child (Bang et al. 2015; Correa-Chávez, Mejía-Arauz, and Rogoff 2015; Urrieta 2015). Children learn by observing and then joining in to demonstrate and practice the new knowledge they've gained from watching. We saw children use these learning practices routinely in Ms. Bailey's classroom—particularly observing and then joining into project groups, work activities, or conversations.

CAPABILITY: ENGAGE IN INTELLECTUAL DISCUSSION

Children in the class had extensive opportunities to talk, chat, share, ask questions, and argue. These discussions took a long time to develop and even longer to be prompted by the children themselves. Getting boys and girls, friends and nonfriends, and the whole class as a community to discuss academic topics took time. Ms. Bailey modeled how to be authentically interested in ways that kept children talking about their intellectual endeavors.

Conversations in Ms. Bailey's class gradually became longer and more spontaneous. The volcano project was extended when Mary brought her volcano model to class. Because the children were so excited about volcanoes, they started talking more with one another. The combination of interest in the volcanoes, the freedom to make noise, and Ms. Bailey's persistence in helping children have conversations eventually resulted in children having ten- to fifteen-minute academic discussions as a class. Sometimes children asked questions without even waiting for the answer. Sometimes children

yelled out their questions or comments with intense excitement and then moved around or smiled at someone next to them instead of listening to the answer. Sometimes children whispered questions, comments, or answers without paying attention or even attempting to get an answer. Asking questions was as much about participation and social interaction as it was about getting academic answers.

Toward the end of the year the children in Ms. Bailey's class got to watch and respond to the film we made of their classroom (the same one that many other children throughout Texas would eventually see). They were struck by how many questions they asked each other—so much so that we ended up asking them to explain why Ms. Bailey wanted them to ask questions and discuss academic ideas instead of her, as the adult, just leading those discussions. We prompted our inquiry to them with a scene in the film when the children asked questions of the tow truck driver. Lorene, Pablo, and Elena explained that asking questions demonstrates a desire to know more.

JENN: But why didn't Miss Bailey just ask questions? Why was she having you guys do it?
PABLO: She, she, she, she—
ELENA: It's because she—
LORENE: Because she wanted us to ask some questions to [the tow truck driver]—
PABLO: [Peter] ask some questions because he wonders why he had that car—
JENN: Yeah, but why should kids ask questions, not just adults?
LORENE: Because kids want to find out too.
ELENA: Kids want to find out if like, um, like something happens because we ask.
PABLO: I got a good one.
LORENE: Because we like [and] want to know why.
PABLO: Because kids want to find out too.

The children in Ms. Bailey's class had many opportunities each day to talk spontaneously. Sometimes this spontaneous talk was supported with planned time in a lesson or in the schedule. More often, the enthusiasm for questions was contagious and children asked one another questions. So instead of offering commentary or sharing facts, children asked questions to one another that created conversation and discussion. It is possible that these conversations were less about facts and more about questions because of the children's experiences with rich discussion and participation in their homes with their

parientes (extended families). Instead of trying to be "correct" or "first," children were patient listeners and seemed to engage in conversation to keep it going instead of trying to control it. The space and support for questions made intellectual and joyful conversation possible.

CAPABILITY: DEEPLY PURSUE KNOWLEDGE

One morning, as the children were at tables writing the date and the weather in their journals, Ms. Bailey noticed some of them pausing and looking around instead of writing. Sensing that perhaps the children couldn't figure out the weather, she asked out loud, "What is the temperature? What is the high today?" Ms. Bailey looked up the weather on her phone and showed the class the page on the doc cam. Nia, an African American avid reader, creative writer, and really good listener, seemed unconvinced. Nia was serious and focused most of the time. She had Black parents and wrote often about her Black family and other people she admired from the Black community. Still, she was not usually the first person to speak up in the large class group. That day, however, she led the short inquiry. Without raising her hand or seeking permission, she got up from her seat and walked outside. She checked the thermometer hanging on the outer wall and then opened the door and walked back into the classroom. "It is 48 degrees," she declared. Children began to write the weather facts in their journals, speculating about why it was so cold. Even though the moment was small and seemed insignificant, it was the first time Nia had initiated an activity.

The class often spent days and weeks trying to understand concepts better. Instead of an hour over three days in a week or thirty minutes for six days over two weeks, they would do two- or three-hour blocks of time at once. Children engaged intellectually with topics for long periods and *they* got to choose what they did. For example, on the day of the human–animal project, most of the children who visited the nurse stayed for a few minutes to get their blood pressure taken. Some asked questions and lingered to see someone else have theirs done. Marcela, though, stayed for more than thirty minutes, watching many people get their blood pressure taken. She asked the nurse a lot of questions. She took time (even after all of that observation) to recruit twenty other people, take their blood pressure, and capture their numbers on a chart she had made in her notebook. Her knowledge moved from observation to experimentation, to participation, creation, organization, and contribution.

CAPABILITY: CURIOUSLY APPROACH NEW TOPICS

Ms. Bailey worried at the beginning of the year because at first the children struggled to come up with ideas about what to study. They didn't ask curious questions that could become inquiry projects. Developing curiosity and the ability to start inquiries took time.

Not knowing things but also being curious and feeling free to pursue their collective interests produced a kind of meaningful urgency among the children. For example, during a long project about the states of matter, the entire class went outside with their notebooks. They had all divided a page into four sections and labeled them "liquid," "solid," "gas," and "both," a section requested by the children for things that could contain multiple states of matter. The activity was to walk around outside and try to fit different things they saw into the gas, liquid, and solid categories on their sheet. They had a buddy to walk with, and they could go anywhere on school grounds. They were supposed to write or draw examples of each (as many as they could come up with) on their paper. Jason, yelled out to others to come see the leaves—they were solid. Lorene noticed the building's paint and wondered aloud if it was a solid or a liquid, settling on liquid. Children went from object to object, conflicted about whether some items were a gas or solid. What about a balloon—was that a gas because it had air in it or a solid because of its firm exterior?

Susan Engel's work on curiosity demonstrates both the developmental and the interactional value of children's being able to act upon their curiosity, which Engel defines simply as "the urge to know more" (2011, 627). This urge to know more is an integral part of being a citizen who engages in causes that are meaningful and connected to communities and justice (Shapiro 2016).

CAPABILITY: LISTEN

Class discussions were long because Ms. Bailey asked lots of follow-up questions when children shared an idea or a detail about their lives. The children had to listen for long periods while this was happening. At the beginning of the human and animals project with Jaime and the horse bones and Marcela's blood-pressure experimentation, the class met all together in the gym. They sat in a big circle to brainstorm characteristics of humans and other animals. Ms. Bailey told them that they were going to have bones in their classroom. They would get to touch them. "Max," she asked, "what do you think we will figure out from looking at those bones?" Max answered that perhaps they

could figure out how long ago the human or animal lived. He made motions to his body that were hard for Ms. Bailey to understand. She nodded, even though there was a lot of noise from children having mini-conversations with one another and the neighboring class having its own discussion on the other side of the gym. Ms. Bailey leaned closer to Max and asked, "Do you mean that if the bones look old or worn out that means they are old?" Max smiled and nodded.

Two more hands went up. Lorene said that maybe by seeing the bones they could know when the animal died. Elena agreed and told Ms. Bailey that the bones could maybe show *how* the animal died. With no one else raising their hand but almost all of the children talking to one another about why dogs chew bones and how bones might show how animals died, Ms. Bailey looked around the circle and asked if there was "anything else we could learn from looking at bones or a piece of a bone." Maybe about the brain, the skull, Jason suggested.

Ms. Bailey explained that two experts would be joining them. One of the visitors was a neurosurgeon. The children asked what "neurosurgeon" meant. Ms. Bailey explained that a neurosurgeon was a doctor who works on the brain. The children were all excited to go into the classroom and see the bones and meet the experts. Yet they stayed in a circle discussing what they could learn. Their discussion was at the height of anticipation, and yet there was no pressure nor a rush. Listening was more important in Ms. Bailey's space than hurrying to get everything done. Being able to spend time listening allowed children to expand their capabilities of learning from others through observing and pulling out pieces of information that would help them participate.

CAPABILITY: FAIL WITHOUT GIVING UP

Ms. Bailey often reminded her class that failing is part of being a scientist. In the early period of the volcano project, Pablo explained that his own attempt to make a model did not work. He had spent a week drawing a volcano model and labeling it. (This was remarkable since Pablo usually resisted writing at all.) He found books and classmates and adults who could help him write what he wanted. He presented his drawn volcano model to the class. Ms. Bailey asked him questions. He paused and nervously asked to get his volcano book. Instead of saying yes and letting him go get the book, Ms. Bailey reminded him that he'd had ideas even before he saw the book. "I'm interested in *those* ideas," she said. Pablo then started to explain the problem he had. "Well, we were gonna make a volcano like them"—pointing to some of his

classmates—"then we could put a water bottle and tie a rubber band on this [the water bottle] and the volcano. So it wouldn't explode."

Pablo then explained how they were going to put baking soda and red food coloring in a water bottle placed in a hole. They could stop it from exploding with a rubber band. This plan failed, though. With Ms. Bailey's prompting, he explained the failure.

MS. BAILEY: So today you changed your plan?
PABLO: Yeah.
MS. BAILEY: What do you want to do now?
PABLO: Well, it didn't work. The thing we did today didn't work.
MS. BAILEY: Can you explain it to me?
PABLO: We were gonna put rocks around it, and then we were going to dig a hole, but we saw this rock but we thought it was connected. There was a rock thing and so we thought it had pipes under it. And then we couldn't build it.
MS. BAILEY: So, you did it outside—
PABLO (INTERRUPTING): Because we put rocks around it and we thought we were going to dig a hole *and* put baking soda in it.
MS. BAILEY: So now what are we going to do? What's the next step? It didn't work outside, so what do we want to do?
PABLO: Me and Mary are going to look in that book again. To see if we can try to make . . . because it tells us how to make a book up there, in there.

Ms. Bailey then asked if he meant a volcano, not a book. Pablo quickly clarified, "It tells us how to make a volcano with clay." Ms. Bailey responded, "I can't wait to see what your next step is!"

Children in the class seemed to see failure as something to be learned from and explored. Ms. Bailey gave children enough time so that if and when they failed, they knew they could try again. Failure became less risky because there was always time to try again.

Jason and the Reflex Hammer

During the animal and human project, Jason got interested in reflex hammers. The neurosurgeon (one of the experts that morning) had brought one for children to try out, along with a human skeleton model and some small models of the brain. He invited Jason and his classmates to take turns sitting in an old office chair so he could show them how the hammer worked. Jason was known for being caring and gentle, for not causing problems when

playing or working in groups. He was Mexican American and spoke mostly English and some Spanish at school and home. He was average height with brown hair and a round face. He wondered out loud to his friends about lots of things and was always willing to contribute to class discussions. Jason was enthusiastic about reading and learning, even when reading was difficult for him. When it was Jason's turn to sit in the chair, he sat down and lifted up one pant leg so that the neurosurgeon could use the reflex hammer to hit just below his knee.

After watching the doctor test reflexes on a couple of children who had turns after him, Jason asked to try the hammer. Brad, a gifted artist who was White and observed more than he spoke, stood next to him. He quickly jumped into the chair to be Jason's first patient. Over and over Jason tried to land the hammer in the right place, just under the kneecap. With each hit, Brad shook his head as if to say, "Nope, it didn't work that time." He sat there for quite a while. He even took the hammer and tried to do it to himself while Jason watched. Then other children gathered around to have a turn. Brad eventually hopped out of the chair. Then Diana squirmed onto the chair, uncharacteristically giggly. Jason hit the hammer below her knee and asked if it tickled. Diana said, "Yes, it tickles," and laughed some more. Jason tried a couple more times, and when Diana pulled her pant leg down

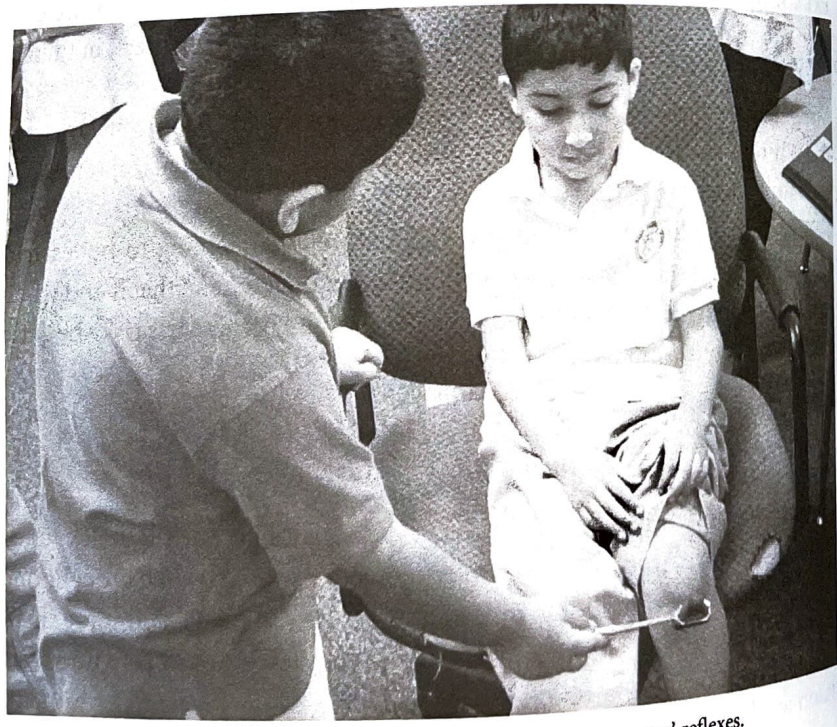

FIGURE 4. Jason experimented with a reflex hammer to try to test classmates' reflexes.

signaling she was done, he looked around to see who would sit in the chair next. Lots of children wanted to have a turn using the hammer, but Jason insisted that he needed more time. The children relented and took more turns sitting in the chair as a patient. Samuel, a Mexican American boy who said witty, funny things to make everyone laugh and who cared deeply about his friends, patiently spent a long time in the chair, shaking his head over and over as Jason tried to hit his leg in the right spot.

After all the children had gone, Brad, who had been watching almost the entire time, sat again in the chair and pulled up his pant leg. Jason resumed trying to hit the leg in just the right spot. After each attempt, Brad shook his head no. Jason tried again. No. Again. Nope. Again. Nope. This went on and on.

Because of Ms. Bailey's time practices, the children did not panic about getting a turn when Jason was not willing to give his up. Jason was a gentle child and not confrontational. He easily gave in to most children's ideas and plans if they countered his own. But on this particular day, he was really trying to figure out how the hammer worked and how to get someone's reflexes to respond the way his had when the doctor tapped him. His classmates were willing to be patient and present as he figured it out.

Agency and Vitality

Young children in Ms. Bailey's class enacted their agency for the sake of one another and to be together. They moved, called out, took their time walking out to recess, and formed project groups to be together. They mattered to each other. And the children mattered to Ms. Bailey. They knew this because she listened and moved closer to them. She took their ideas seriously and changed her plans when they got really interested in something. They remembered details and noticed who was absent. This mattering is what Boldt defines as *vitality*, or the "powerful experience of being vital" (in press, 7).

The children's vitality, their *vital mattering*, was obvious in the everyday moments of the class because through the enactment of their agency (and their willingness to sometimes not act) they were responding to one another. They noticed one another. They joined in with others' curiosity about volcanoes, rainbows, ice, and bones. Boldt points out that vitality has as much to do with embodiment and the nonverbal—moving around, checking up on someone, standing next to someone in distress, or joining someone who is enjoying a story—as it has to do with what is said or written. She warns that focusing curricular and pedagogical attention only on verbal communication risks missing the full range of skills, knowledge, and relationships children

develop and use to matter to one another. Vitality is an energy that flows through spaces and unites or moves people into relationships that are beyond skills or competencies.

While feeling as if one matters is important for young children's development, it is not equally distributed. Most children of color are not consistently given enough freedom at school to show others that they matter or to feel from others that they themselves matter. Boldt (2020) laments,

> It is no news that the bodies, energies, expressions, and relationships of students from minoritized communities are seen, read negatively, and punished at far greater rates than those of white, middle and upper class, straight, and abled peers. What is most often demanded from minoritized students is the restraint of energy, movement, and affective and embodied connections. In the wish for student and even teacher compliance, what feels alive to participants, their contributions, moments of spontaneity, improvisation, playfulness, and friendship often matter little or are seen as threatening.

Young children in Ms. Bailey's class mattered. Because they were able to influence and make decisions about their learning, they could demonstrate this mattering, this vitality. Vitality is a flow of energy that is contextual and relational, built in moments when what is happening, felt, and being experienced takes center stage and informs teaching and learning. Young children need to experience vitality because vitality is being able to move, explore, create, participate, collaborate, communicate, and enact agency in what matters to them in order to matter to themselves and one another. Through vitality or *la esencia de ser un niño* (the essence of being a child) children enact their agency and so can show and expand their capabilities. While much of the discussion of agency in this book focuses on how it impacts academic and social development, we want to emphasize that above all, agency allows children to show their vitality—that they matter to one another.