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A CASE STUDY OF A KINDERGARTEN TEACHER: EXAMINING PRACTICES
AND BELIEFS THAT SUPPORT THE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CLASSROOM
CLIMATE (323 pp.)

Co-Directors of Dissertation: Martha J. Lash, Ph.D.
Richard P. Ambrose, Ph.D.

This 5-month qualitative case study investigated the social-emotional climate of one half-day kindergarten classroom by examining the role of the teacher in establishing and sustaining a classroom climate that nurtured the social-emotional lives of students. This case study asks: How and why did the teacher establish and sustain a classroom climate that nurtured the social-emotional lives of students? Data sources included extensive observations, interviews, conversations, field notes, research memos, and school artifacts. Initial findings identified an emergent curriculum that was embedded within democratic practices which nurtured social responsibility, equity, and empathy among the kindergarten students. Further examination identified three components that my research showed to be critical for this teacher to integrate into his classroom: initiating an environment of care that goes beyond the academics, practicing a deliberate pedagogical artistry, and incorporating critical reflection. These areas of care, artistry, and reflection may clash with the traditional teacher-directed lessons that focus on academic standards. Based on my research, I argued that these areas are essential for providing a holistic environment for learning; one that nurtures the social-emotional as well as academic climate of any classroom. This pedagogical stance teaches critical thinking and is anchored in a safe learning environment.