Child Development Theory as a Mediator of Novice Teachers' Ethnotheories to Increase Learning and Justice in the Classroom

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CHILD DEVELOPMENT THEORY AS A MEDIATOR OF NOVICE TEACHERS’ ETHNOTHEORIES TO INCREASE LEARNING AND JUSTICE IN THE CLASSROOM

by

NANCY MICHELE CARDWELL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York 2014
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr. Colette Daiute

___________________________
Date

Chair of Examining Committee

Dr. Maureen O’Connor

___________________________
Date

Executive Officer
Abstract

CHILD DEVELOPMENT THEORY AS A MEDIATOR OF NOVICE TEACHERS’ ETHNOTHEORIES TO INCREASE LEARNING AND JUSTICE IN THE CLASSROOM

by

Nancy M. Cardwell

Adviser: Professor Colette Daiute

Many urban public schools use teaching methods that isolate and silence children to compel compliance (Schwebel, 2004; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003; Baumrind, 1991). In these contexts, black and brown children are disciplined more often and harshly than white, sent through the court system 70% of the time (Alexander, 2012). Novice teachers, appearing expert without expertise, use unconscious personal theories or ethnotheories to compel compliance, projecting an illusion of expertise without understanding the consequences for children’s development and achievement (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman, 2010; Skovholt, 2004). An advance in the field would be to learn how ethnotheories interact with formal theories, like child development theory (CDT), to mediate pedagogical choices in the classroom.

In this qualitative study, I interviewed 12 participants to learn about CDT as a mediator of classroom practice to increase learning and justice in diverse educational contexts (Daiute, 2014). I found that the unconscious use of ethnotheories reproduced injustice by subordinating children’s needs to teacher’s experiences and constrained learning through silencing, isolation and exclusion.
(Kahn & Kammerman, 2001; Harvey, 1999). I further found that the conscious use of ethnotheories mediated by CDT interrupts injustice by placing children's needs at the center and teachers adjusting their teaching approaches to create opportunities for children to tell their story, connect with each other in an inclusive, rigorous, respectful learning environment (Young, 2011; Harvey, 1999; Kenyon & Randall, 1997).

Given this, teacher educators can use frequent guided reflections to support novice teachers' restorying their ethnotheories mediated through the lens of CDT situated within a global context (Kenyon & Randall, 1997). Researchers need to examine the effectiveness of this practice in relation to increasing academic achievement by investigating how novice teachers consciously use their ethnotheories mediated by CDT to adjust their teaching approaches to support increased academic success. In conclusion, CDT becomes a mediator of novice teachers' ethnotheories and a tool to adjust their classroom practice toward increased learning and justice by encouraging children to narrate their experiences to create multiple points of entry for meaningful academic lessons (Daiute, 2014; King & Cardwell, 2009; Cardwell, 2002; Kenyon & Randall, 1997).
Acknowledgments

I would never have been able to finish my dissertation without the guidance of my advisor, committee members, and the love and support from my friends and family.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Colette Daiute, for her insights, intellectual generosity, guidance, patience, and kindness throughout this process. Her approach was perfect – I couldn’t ask for more in a dissertation advisor. I would also like to thank Dr. Michelle Fine for creating an environment that nurtured me intellectually and personally. Her critique, questions and insights about psychology and social justice were invaluable in helping me develop and refine this work. I would also like to thank Dr. Katherine (Katy) O’Donnell for providing invaluable insights on adult development and teacher preparation. Her guidance and support were ever present with impromptu pep talks, insightful observations and pointed question that kept me moving ever forward while feeling her gentle, yet firm hand on my back. My early conversations with Dr. Joseph Glick helped me expand the theoretical possibilities of this work. A special thanks to Dr. Gess LeBlanc whose insights and guidance for my final defense were incredibly helpful.

Individually, each of my final defense committee members is smart, kind and intellectually generous. Collectively, they made my final defense a challenging, interesting and enjoyable experience.

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Aronowitz, Bill Cross, A. J. Franklin, Martin Ruck and Anna Stetsenko. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Jude Kubran for her open door, clarity, good advice, nurturing space and amazing capacity to help me successfully navigate the administrative component of doctoral work.

Lia Gelb holds a special place in my heart for her generosity, unwavering support, mentoring and wisdom from the moment she interviewed me for graduate school nearly 30 years ago when I was a novice teacher. Many thanks to my colleagues and friends, Stan Chu, Barbara Coleman, Beverly Falk, Nancy Gropper, Marian Howard, Adrianne Kamsler, Nancy McKeever, Hal Melnick, Terry Orr, Marcia Singer, and Jon Snyder for their support, care and continuing interest in my work.

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Chapter 1

Relevant Literature Review

The life of an individual cannot be adequately understood without references to the institutions within which his biography is enacted.

C. Wright Mills

Introduction:

As a teacher educator and researcher, I noticed that the graduate students in my child development courses questioned whether theories of human development applied to the predominantly black and brown children from low-income families they tended to encounter in public school classrooms. The question emerged because they saw these children as being so different from the white, middle-class, European children on whom the much of the child development stage theory was normed that these theories didn’t seem to apply. Collapsing the appearance of difference as in the case of race, class, culture, language and gender with actual difference as in being human or not human is a danger of using unconscious, tacit personal theories or ethnotheories alone to guide classroom practice (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman, 2010; Polanyi, 1968).

My graduate students’ questioning the applicability of child development theory to all children regardless of life circumstance indicated they were drawing on their ethnotheories (see p. 30-32 for a detailed description), anchored in cultural
stereotypes that, if enacted in a classroom, could become a mechanism for civilized oppression, an interlocking, relational process of silencing, isolation and exclusion (Kahn & Kammerman, 2001; Harvey, 1999). Teaching without using child development theory to inform practice, can deny children’s individuality by implementing the same practices with all children that ensure varied outcomes that reproduce the stratifications present in the larger society (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman, 2010; Bourdieu, 1977). Teaching practices anchored in ethnotheories can unwittingly promote a subtle, yet pervasive of relational oppression through social exclusion and civilized oppression that can interfere with children’s academic achievement (Steele, 2010; Kahn & Kammerman, 2001; Harvey, 1999).

If graduate students left their child development courses believing it wasn’t applicable to all children regardless of life circumstance, I wondered what, if anything, I could do to change their view. I also found myself frustrated by their ‘unwillingness’ to ‘engage’ with the theoretical content of my child development course as a useful body of knowledge on which to rest their pedagogical choices about how to best teach their students. ‘Why didn’t they get it,’ I wondered. In hindsight, I realize that I was blaming my students while holding my own position and ethnotheories intact along with leaving the efficacy of my teaching methods unquestioned.

By taking my graduate students’ questions seriously, I discovered the importance of teaching child development theory as both theory and method. My graduate students’ questions about their students’ behavior or rather misbehavior
weren’t off topic or necessary to table until we ‘covered’ that age. Their questions were in fact at the core of what I needed to address in order to demonstrate the practical usefulness of child development theory in varied settings with a variety of children and teachers. The graduate students’ questions, grounded in their ethnotheories, were their beginning efforts to create connections between their ethnotheories and child development theory. As a result, I began to scaffold their understandings to help them make connections between the graduate students’ classroom experiences and child development theory. Doing this repositioned my graduate students’ ethnotheories, from impediments to resources worthy of explicit interrogation and discussion bringing them into conversation with child development theory, providing the scaffolding necessary for them to narrate what gave rise to their questions and how they can generate theory driven interpretations of children’s behavior.

This study came about because I wanted to learn more about the range of novice teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about child development theory so that I could engage each of my graduate students meaningfully and more productively in the child development course material, encouraging them to apply child development theory in their classrooms with the children they teach, across the multiple boundaries of race, gender, ethnicity or socioeconomic location. To explore this issue further, I generated a central research question for this study,

How does child development theory mediate classroom practice toward increasing learning and justice across educational contexts?

I developed this research question as a way to consider the interplay of ethnotheories and child development theory in novice teachers’ constructions of
learning and justice in their classrooms. To inform this research question, I chose a multidisciplinary, layered examination of the existing literature on development, conceptions of children, schooling, and novice teachers to maintain the situated and nested nature of development for my data collection and analysis (Bronfenbrenner, 1979/2006; Vygotsky, 1978).

This approach held open the possibility that child development theory could function as a cultural tool within teachers (see p. 27-30 for a more detailed description). Specifically, teachers function as cultural tools, helping children make connections between their lived experiences and the roles they might hold as adults in the larger society. Novice teachers, preparing for this role, face a variety of challenges and dilemmas as they begin to integrate or accommodate professional knowledge with their ethnotheories (Skovholt, 2004; Edwards, Gandini & Giovanni, 1996; Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Piaget, 1968). Last, I consider the development of the individual child within the school context as a way to examine the interaction of adults’ understanding of children and children’s understanding of themselves. I organized this literature review into four sections beginning with an examination of those cultural norms and values that shape the dominant societal narratives that support tacit assumptions and unconscious, personal theories or ethnotheories,

**Development of Culture** focuses on the sociocultural context of education with particular attention to poverty, social exclusion and civilized oppression. **Development of Schools and Schooling** focuses on the institutional role of schools in society with particular attention to the technologies of exclusion, the types of schools available, technologies of exclusion and the educational debt incurred when educational opportunities are withheld from certain groups of children. **Development of Novice Teachers** focuses on the challenges of professional teacher preparation to gain greater insight on novice teachers’ experiences and dilemmas with particular attention to the research on novice teachers, the
challenge of having to appear expert without the expertise and the research on good teaching. *Development of Children* focuses on how children grow and develop by examining conceptions of childhood, parenting approaches, ethnotheories and child development theory.

**Development of Culture**

Culture provides people with dominant values and narratives to help them make sense of the experiences and conditions that shape their daily lives. At the same time, dominant cultural processes can be harnessed for positive social and economic transformation, influencing aspirations, the coordination of collective action and the ways in which power and agency can work within society (Rao & Walton, 2004:4). It is a set of contested, negotiated attributes that are constantly in flux, shaping and being shaped by the interplay of social and economic interactions among human beings (Rao & Walton, 2004:4, Vygotsky/Kozulin, 1986). In the US, there is a dominant cultural norm against noticing and naming difference because differences are a source of conflict. Among the most silenced difference are race and class (Wise, 2010) in order to avoid discomfort and conflict. Silencing sources of potential conflicts like race and class for black and brown children from low-income families to silence the salient parts of their identities inside the classroom (Steele, 2010). This silencing is a part of being socialized into society.

When we define culture as a view of the world and a system of attaching meaning to ourselves, others and events through the use and development of cultural tools, an inherent tension emerges between ideas about human and economic development (Vygotsky/Kozulin, 1986). Human development theory focuses on ideas about individuals and groups of individuals’ pattern of growth and
behavior. The individual is at the center, positioned as a social being whose subjectivity defines and is defined by a cultural context with cultural tools (Lee, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978).

Economic development focuses on ideas about how to sustain human life by maximizing capital - human, social, material and financial. Maximizing capital is at the center of economic development and the individual is only one among many resources to be developed to increase profits. In this, the individual’s needs and desires are subordinated to maximizing capital for the ‘greater good,’ benefitting the group over the individual. The good citizen sacrifices his/her individual dreams in the present to ensure the survival of their family, group, community, and nation-state (Rao & Walton, 2004). Schools are effective partners in socializing children to accept this economically grounded view of development when they adopt society’s goals as their own (Rao & Walton, 2004; Schiffauer, Baumann, Kastoryano & Vertovec, 2004).

The intersection of human and economic development of culture emerges in the question, ‘who has the right to aspire?’ (Sen, 1999). This question seems to collapse past and present societal shifts that reserved aspirations and hope for those who rule and lead. With human development, the individual is at the center and the choice about how to live is theirs. With economic development, the needs of society are at the center and choices about how individuals or groups live can be made by others often coming at the expense of the individual for the ‘greater good,’ which sustains the paradox of liberation and oppression woven into the fabric of
America’s dominant views and values about education (Wilentz, 2006; Anderson, 1988; Bowles & Ginitis, 1976/2011).

However, when “trust has been betrayed, when disappointment has replaced hope,” or “when the freedom to choose has been eliminated” the seeds for a “culture of apathy” have been sewn, it is a culture “completely incapable of development” (Douglas, 2004). Maintaining the important balance of human and economic development in a society that values self-determination through education in the interest of the greater good necessitates an examination of poverty, social exclusion and civilized oppression (Rao & Walton, 2004:21; Harvey 1999).

**Poverty, Social Exclusion and Civilized Oppression:** From the inception of the US, poverty has served as a dividing line indicating those who are included in the benefits of the ‘new world’ and those who were excluded. Poverty isn’t just about being without work or money,

Poverty is to be without whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for a credible person, even of the lowest order, to be without (Smith, 1776/1993).

Here, a lack of worthiness is an explanation of why someone might be poor, holding the individual responsible for their own poverty because they aren’t credible (Foner, 1999). It is important to note that this definition is one that is imposed from those who are not poor to define those who are. This imposed definition swerves to silence the ways in which the condition of poverty is a by-product of our economic system. It also raises the question of who decides the attributes that ascribe credibility, worthiness and wealth. More recently, researchers have found that poverty is a social product resulting from an unequal distribution of resources and
not laziness, a lack of credibility or a self-destructive lifestyle (Lott & Bullock, 2001; Fine & Weiss, 1998).

Social exclusion is a consequence of poverty and is the process by which individuals and groups are excluded from participating in broader mainstream society due to their low income and constricted access to social opportunities like employment, social services and benefits (Kahn & Kammerman, 2002). Conceptually, social exclusion offers a way to examine the direct and indirect consequences of adult unemployment, placing adults at the center while children reside passively at the margins (Schiffauer, Baumann, Kastoryano & Vertovec, 2004; Kahn & Kammerman, 2002).

For this study, I am shifting my gaze from social exclusion as adult disenfranchisement and unemployment alone to include an examination of how children learn about and experience social exclusion in school. With 17% of children in America living in poverty, considering the impact of social exclusion in children’s lives is important especially if schools are educating children to take their parents’ place in society (Bowles & Gintis, 1976/2011) fostering the relationally based civilized oppression by unconsciously permitting children to silence and exclude one another from fully participating in the classroom. This mirrors and reinforces social exclusion in the classroom, which interferes with learning and justice in the classroom for all children. It also can sacrifice individual children’s hopes and aspirations (Harvey, 1999; Sen, 1999).

The freedom to choose your future is at the heart of what it means to be an American (Wilentz, 2006; Cremin, 1970). Without self-determination, oppression
ensues, closing off hope and by extension development (Douglas, 2004).

Oppression is the experience of repeated, widespread systemic injustice. It need not be extreme, involve the legal system or physical violence (Deutsch, 2006).

Civilized oppression is one example,

Civilized oppression refers to the vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, which are supported by the media and cultural stereotypes as well as by the structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms (Harvey, 1999:3-4).

It is relationally based and often subtle yet pervasive. Understanding civilized oppression requires detecting the kinds of mechanisms used to carry it out. Unlike physically violent oppression, civilized oppression often involves acts of omission, like silencing, isolating and socially excluding individuals or groups, and cannot sensibly be made the subject of law (Harvey, 2010:14). One example of civilized oppression is the silencing of race by taking a colorblind approach and doing the same thing for everyone (Wise, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2009). Doing the same thing for everyone, we achieve equal treatment with inequitable outcomes because no class is homogeneous, which means that only a portion of existing needs are being met. Because it is equal, if you are one whose needs are not being met then there’s little or nothing to be said or done about it.

Initially, it may be difficult to figure out why certain individuals have stopped speaking, appearing to perhaps isolate themselves. However, there are a myriad of apparently small actions that can, and in cases of physically non-violent civilized oppression, form long-term patterns of silencing, isolation and social exclusion, subordination, and denigration that can have a cumulative and negative impact on
the psychological well-being and life chances of the victims (Harvey, 2010:15). This view provides support to help novice teachers surface their own tacit beliefs and ethnotheories so that they can make pedagogical choices that advance learning and justice in their classrooms. Learning is a social, actively co-constructed endeavor that takes place within the context of a relationship. Children who don’t ask questions and who aren’t encouraged to ask questions do less well in school (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

**Development of Schools and Schooling**

The US is organized around a set of ideals anchored in self-determination and equality shared by an ethnically, religiously, and racially diverse group of individuals who sought and seek refuge from oppression and social exclusion in their home countries (Nasaw, 1979). In this quest, immigrants’ hopes and dreams fueled their progress in the face of tremendous obstacles even as they mourned the loss of the societies they left behind. Public education is central to the promise of American democracy (Wilentz, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 1997). At its best, public education provides a vehicle for all citizens regardless of their wealth or circumstance of birth, to aspire to the full rights and benefits of citizenship, creating a society with shared purpose and opportunity.

Education for democracy must educate citizens not only for economic fitness or the ability to make decisions in a voting booth, but also for a shared social life and the pursuit of human possibility (Darling-Hammond, 1997). School is the institution where children learn what society thinks of them, values in them and expects from them. All schools, public, private and religious, prepare children to become citizens
At the turn of the 20th Century, the bureaucratic school was designed to process a great many students efficiently, selecting and supporting only a few for ‘thinking work.’ This structure seemed to privilege the greater good over the needs of the individual.

Strategies for sorting and tracking students were developed to ration the scarce resources of expert teachers and rich curriculum, justifying the standardization of teaching procedures. These strategies employed a variety of ways to silence, isolate, and socially exclude some groups of students while simultaneously propelling others. This approach enabled greater routinization of teaching with less reliance on individual teachers’ professional judgment. It is from this bureaucratized approach that three types of school systems emerge as a self-perpetuating structure to ration educational opportunity (Schwebel, 2004).

**Types of Schools:** One of the ways educational opportunities and resources have been parsed out in the US is along the lines of social class (Aronowitz, 2004). Debates about whether to educate children for work, citizenship or self-fulfillment are reflected in the multiple school systems the US provides to educate children (Schwebel, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1997),

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<th>Type of School</th>
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<td><strong>Elite</strong></td>
<td>Provides high skills and rigorous content that encourage creative and independent thought found in public exam schools and elite private schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Worker</strong></td>
<td>Provides skills and content, not encouraging creative and independent thought found in good public schools and parochial schools.</td>
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An examination of each school system reveals their interdependence to sustain the greater economic good often at the expense of the individual’s liberty to choose their own fate. Entry into these three school systems is tied to a child’s family’s socioeconomic location rather than the child’s intellectual capacity (Schwebel, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 1976/2011).

The elite school system produces the future leaders in industry, commerce, government, education, health, journalism, and the arts. These graduates will learn the skills and knowledge necessary to identify fundamental problems and create unimagined solutions that advance societal knowledge (Schwebel, 2004: 36-37).

The worker school system meets society’s need for a large, semi-skilled work force to perform the important everyday tasks in all fields of occupational activity. These graduates provide the power to keep the economy moving, having developed efficiency and dependability, which are required for the variety of positions these graduates will hold that operate strictly by principles and protocols outlined by graduates of the elite school system. While creativity is often a welcome quality in any field, there are limits to the degree to which workers’ creativity is a valuable part of a large work force (Schwebel, 2004: 37-38).

The custodial school system meets society’s need for low-skill, minimum wage workers, especially concentrated in the service industry. The children in the custodial school system graduates are taught punctuality, unquestioning obedience and to believe that their poor school achievement reflects their own inadequacies and is therefore their fault (Schwebel, 2004; Saltman & Gabard, 2003). These

| Custodial | Exposure to rudimentary skills found in urban public schools serving children from low-income families. |

...
lessons may quell these graduates’ supposedly innate, violent and criminal behavior as they face a lifetime of demeaning, low paying jobs they didn’t necessarily choose with little or no hope for advancement or access to the American dream (Schwebel, 2004; Hochschild, 1995).

The gap between the educational quality of the elite and custodial systems can be characterized as an experience of civilized oppression (Harvey, 1999). The lack of awareness of the social, economic, political and educational inequities of enforcing school rules and policies without question sustains this gap (Schwebel, 2004: 68-69; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003; Harvey, 1999; Kozol, 1991). Noticing the ways in which tacit, ethnotheory based classroom practices can contribute to children being silenced isolated and socially excluded surface the subtleties of civilized oppression and require an examination of the mechanisms by which it is carried out inside schools (Harvey, 1999).

**Technologies of Exclusion**: Sorting and tracking children rations access to educational opportunities and constitute the technologies of exclusion that reinforce and sustain social exclusion and civilized oppression in the classroom. Technologies of exclusion include ability testing, tracking, labeling and special education, all of which have contributed to the perhaps well-intentioned resegregation inside US public schools (Ferri & Connor, 2005: 470). These technologies of exclusion manifest themselves inside schools through excessive, biased testing, stigmatizing labels and educational norms, all of which contribute to resegregating classrooms within schools along the same race and class lines as found in society, rationalized by a narrative of merit (Ferri & Connor, 2005: 469;
Kozol, 1991). Accepting this narrative without question, naturalize these technologies of exclusion, which strengthen and replicate practices that sustain social exclusion and civilized oppression, perpetuating stratifications (Ferri & Connor, 2005: 469). The civilized oppression of sorting and tracking children in schools is obscured within a dominant cultural narrative of merit (Saltman & Gabbard, 2003; Harvey, 1999).

In a study of black boys’ school experiences that examined urban public school disciplinary practices and punishment,

Punishment is a fruitful site for a close-up look at routine institutional practices, individual acts, and cultural sanctions that give life and power to racism in a school setting that not only produces massive despair and failure among black students, but that increasingly demonizes them (Ferguson, 2000: 19-20).

This study surfaced links among the cultural, institutional and individual, reflecting societal values that silences, isolates and socially excludes children through civilized oppression by containing them physically and academically in oppressive, unjust, custodial schools (Ferri & Connor, 2005: 470; Ferguson, 2000; Harvey, 1999).

Meeting US society’s economic needs with a stratified school system that constrains individual children’s educational opportunities and aspirations denies so many children and families the chance to choose their own life path that would benefit society socially and economically. On a broader level, the technologies of exclusion squander individuals’ talents ostensibly for the greater good but ultimately constrain economic development and sabotage the greater good (Ferri & Connor, 2005; Schwebel, 2004; Ferguson, 2000). This loss of brainpower was described as
the achievement gap but was recently repositioned as an education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

**Educational Debt:** A core value of US public education is that family status should not determine children’s life chances and outcomes (Nasaw, 1979). Despite this, public education is a site of both educational opportunity and oppression along the lines of race and class,

The education debt is the foregoing schooling resources that we could have (should have) been investing in (primarily) low income kids, which deficit leads to a variety of social problems (e.g. crime, low productivity, low wages, low labor forced participation) that require on-going public investment (Ladson-Billings, 2006:5).

Here, the education debt is described as the compounded societal losses for not investing in education opportunities for children from low-income families. From an economic perspective, it doesn’t make sense because remediation and incarceration are significantly more costly financially to society and personally for the individually. More importantly, society loses these children’s talents, innovations and salaries.

The education debt addresses these long-term consequences of stratified education funding based on class that compounds the social exclusion of unemployment by withholding education opportunities from the children of unemployed, socially excluded adults (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Kahn & Kammerman, 2001)

Through the lens of social exclusion, the ways in which children are treated in each of the three school systems is grounded society’s views and adults’ conceptions of children and childhood. Schooling is the preferred institution in nation-states that transfers dominant societal lessons and tools from one generation to the next in an attempt to reproduce and transform itself (Schiffauer, Baumann,
However, due to the unresolved and paradoxical purposes of education, schools remain contested sites that novice teachers, who lack the preparation to fully understand the long-term implications of their actions, can unknowingly enter and act to reproduce inequities they may want to interrupt.

**Development of the Novice Teacher**

A challenge for novice teachers is learning to notice the subtleties of civilized oppression and the technologies of exclusion that their professional preparation can unwittingly omit. In child development courses, the behaviorist notion ‘what we know shapes what we do’ supports the reciprocity of developmental interaction in that adults’ interactions with children shape the adults they will become and the adults we are (Nager & Shapiro, 2000). At the same time, developmental interaction can help reveal the dangers to the individual and nation of civilized oppression in schooling, as in the case of the custodial school system (Schwebel, 2004),

> When you control a man’s thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his “proper place” and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary. …History shows that it does not matter who is in power…those who have not learned to do for themselves and have to depend solely on others never obtain any more rights or privileges in the end than they did in the beginning (Woodson, 1933/1998).

In a democracy, like the United States, active, informed participation by all citizens is required to sustain the nation. We cannot afford to educate select groups for purposes they and their families did not choose. Further,
education for subjugation can place parents and teachers at odds with each other (Cardwell, 2007; Edwards, Gandini & Govanni, 1996).

Given the subtleties of civilized oppression and the developmental risks of compelled compliance, novice teachers need to avoid basing their classroom practice on the tacit knowledge of their ethnotheories alone. Learning child development theory as both theory and method provides novice teachers with the opportunity to make their tacit ethnotheories explicit, transforming them from barriers to resources to create multiple ways to engage each child and interrupt social exclusion and civilized oppression in the classroom. For example,

Child development is the core understanding one will need to understand how to teach. It affects the whole way you teach them. …the whole art of teaching is the finesse with which you adjust to where they are (Ron).

For Ron, this dynamic use of child development theory provides ongoing support for him to maintain interactions with children that facilitate active classroom participation. This use of child development theory interrupts civilized oppression, promoting learning and justice by encouraging all children to speak who they are and what they know as full members of the class entitled to attention, care and intellectual support. Novice teachers, hearing what their students understand and don’t, know what and how to teach. This study is designed to uncover insights on how novice teachers learn and use child development theory for increased classroom learning and justice providing a rigorous experience for each student they teach.
**Research on the Novice Teacher:** Currently, an intense political battle is being waged on the federal and state levels between teacher educators and policy makers both of which hold conflicting visions about how to prepare high quality or good teachers in a diverse democratic society. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, the Bush administration reframed the task of placing a ‘highly qualified’ teacher in every classroom by circumventing teacher education preparation programs (Ravitch, 2010). As a result, preparing and providing ‘highly qualified’ teachers for every classroom is no longer a problem of teaching, learning and practice. Policy makers have redefined it as a technical problem of training, testing, and implementation of policies that list the proven effective qualities and practices of good teachers to produce improved pupil outcomes. This legislative view of teachers and teaching feeds the notion that teaching is a job anyone can be ‘trained’ to do by imbuing candidates with the ‘proven effective’ strategies and content that rest largely on test scores, disregarding the developmental and relational aspects of teaching central in the work of teacher educators (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

By redefining ‘high quality’ teachers based on content knowledge and test scores, policy makers ignored the relational and developmental nature of teaching and learning. There is no argument that teachers must be well versed in content knowledge in order to convey new information to children in the classroom. The argument and conflict emerges when attention turns to the process by which children learn. Unless a teacher can gain children’s cooperation, a relational task not addressed by scripted curricula, children don’t learn because they refuse (Kohl,
Further, policy makers seem to ignore three decades of research showing that what keeps teachers and children in the classroom is relationships (Nieto, 2003; Fine, 1991; Lortie, 1975; Piaget, 1968).

With looming teacher shortages and the enactment of NCLB, a great deal of attention and resources are focused on accelerated teacher preparation with little attention paid to retaining teachers once they enter the field (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Understandably, policy makers’ focus is on the technical problems associated with acquiring ‘highly qualified’ teachers for each classroom nationwide. However, because the focus is on acquisition, little attention is devoted to retaining ‘highly qualified’ teachers once they enter the classroom. With one-third of the new urban public school teachers leaving within the first two years, the stresses of being a novice teacher bear closer scrutiny (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

**Appearing Expert without Expertise:** These high attrition rates among novice teachers signal a professional distress that needs to be explored, understood and addressed. The work of teacher educators frames the preparation of novice teachers as a problem of teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith, 2004). There is tremendous stress associated with being a novice in the ‘helping’ professions because they need to appear expert when in fact they are learners. Another stress is the struggle to place the children’s needs ahead of their own because novices tend to be consumed with the notion of ‘getting it right’ (Skovholt, 2004). An important part of a teacher’s job is to create optimal learning environments that take the individual needs of their students’ into account as they offer challenging academic content (Dewey, 1938/1997). Without teachers who know and understand
child development theory and use it to make sense of their students’ behavior in deeply personal and intellectual ways, novice teachers will be unable to create optimal learning environments that support academic achievement for all children (Cardwell, 2005).

Novice teachers struggle to appear expert without expertise by demonstrating to others that they can ‘control’ their students. On the surface, the novice can appear expert by using ethnotheories alone but lack the expertise in child development theory needed to mediate children’s learning and later explain the rationale for their choices. A teacher who doesn’t know the consequences of their actions for children, because they lack the child development fund of knowledge, becomes an unwitting participant in constructing constrained learning contexts through civilized oppression that serves to silence, isolate and socially exclude the very students they want to teach. At a time when urban public school teachers’ discretionary authority is being legislated away, their ability to establish relationships, address children’s questions, individual needs and develop iterative curricula as part of a child centered pedagogy is severely curtailed rendering teaching a technical task that ‘anyone’ can do with minimal preparation.

For the purposes of this study, child development theory has a role as a pedagogical tool to support novice teachers making choices about their teaching based on actual expertise rather than an approximation. Prepared with a strong understanding of child development theory along with the willingness and capacity to use it, novice teachers can draw on a base of generalized knowledge about their students’ behavior and capacities to learn that extends far beyond the novice
teacher’s own personal experiences. Understanding child development theory offers novice teachers insights on children’s behavior, learning processes, pedagogical choices and curricula choices that could provide a firm foundation for the personal relationships and academic rigor that are the cornerstones of good teaching.

**Research on Good Teaching:** Teachers are expected to act in the interests of children in service to society. When there is a conflict between the needs of children and the needs of the state on behalf of the ‘greater good,’ the teacher is expected to advance the needs of the state even if doing so comes at the expense of the individual child (Cardwell, 2007; Nasaw, 1979). Parents are assumed to act in the best interests of their children (Books, 1994). This stance can and often does leave teachers and parents at odds with each other (Edwards, Gandini & Govanni, 1996).

A recent study in the United Kingdom examined children’s perceptions of good teaching (Beishuizen, Hof, vanPatten, Bouwmeester, Asscher, 2001). Their findings are outlined in the chart below,

**Table 1.2 – Children’s Perceptions of Good Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary School Level</th>
<th>Secondary School Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td>emphasize meeting students’ emotional needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>like the emotional support and wanted more academic challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers and Students</strong></td>
<td>wanted increased personal relationships to match the emphasis on academic contents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the primary level, these findings suggest a mismatch between teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the balance between relationships and academic content. Perhaps the children felt well supported emotionally and desired more academic challenge. In primary and secondary school the students may seek what they might
feel they lack. From the teachers’ perspective, they may feel more confident in their content area knowledge due to increased specialized subject area attention in secondary school. Teachers at the primary level may emphasize their students’ emotional needs over academic challenges. These findings indicate that both teachers and students seek closer personal relationships in secondary school; perhaps feeling the emphasis on academic content is strong enough. They further indicate that teachers and students describe good teaching as providing both personal support and intellectual challenge in service to children’s learning (Beishuizen, Hof, vanPatten, Bouwmeester, Asscher, 2001).

Teaching in general and good teaching in particular involves love, trust and respect imbedded in the socio-historical context of relationships between teachers and students (Nieto, 2003; Cardwell, 2002; Noddings, 1992). Specifically, teaching is “a vocation based on love” (Nieto, 2003:37) that emphasizes the importance of balancing the emotional distance of professionalism with the emotional intimacy of care without sacrificing one for the other (Noddings, 1992). Martin Buber, known for his philosophy of dialogue, advanced the notion of confirmation, which is about receiving and being received by another person can be applied to teaching (Noddings, 1992). At its core, good teaching rests on children knowing they are safe, seen, understood, received, loved and accepted by their teachers (Nieto, 2003; Noddings, 1992).

Good teachers understand what students everywhere can confirm: teaching is not just talking, and learning is not just listening. “Loving” teachers are able to figure out not only what they want to teach but also how to teach in a way that
students can understand, relate to and use (Nieto, 2003; Noddings, 1992).

Furthermore, they know what students are ready for and need to learn, so they choose tasks that are productive, and they organize these tasks in a way that builds understanding. Finally, good teachers use formative, ongoing assessments to monitor students’ growth and progress so they can address specific needs and keep students engaged in school, learning productively and growing as cooperative and thoughtful citizens who will be able to participate in society (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

To accomplish this, good teachers need to understand themselves and each child as an individual and member of the classroom group consciously using their ethnotheories and child development theory to influence and be influenced by, learning and justice in the classroom (Horowitz, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005:88; Lortie, 1975).

These conceptions of ‘loving’ or good teaching offer a working description of adaptive expertise. More specifically, the literature outlines two types of teaching expertise—routine and adaptive,

**Table 1.3 – Types of Teaching Expertise**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Routine Experts</th>
<th>Adaptive Experts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasizes efficiency and links with Piaget’s concept of assimilation</td>
<td>Emphasizes effectiveness and links with Piaget’s concept of accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a core set of competencies that they apply throughout their lives with greater and greater efficiency so they no longer have to think about their actions, they become automatic—second nature even.</td>
<td>Change their core competencies and continually expand the breadth and depth of their expertise, holding efficiency and effectiveness in tension.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Routine expertise promotes increasingly efficient pedagogy without necessitating teachers becoming conscious of their assumptions or ethnotheories because they assimilate children’s behavior into their view of teaching and learning without thinking about its effect on children. As such, when children don’t fit into their teachers’ routine expertise, teachers don’t have the capacity to create new classroom practices and adjust their teaching to meet their students’ needs. Efficiency involves greater abilities to perform particular tasks without having to think too much about it to achieve them (Shepard, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond & Rust, 2005:361; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Atkinson & Schiffrin, 1968).

Adaptive expertise rests on the conscious use of ethnotheories informed by child development theory conceptualized as both theory and method. Good teachers, using adaptive expertise, are able to perform a variety of activities without having to stop and think about how to do them. They are also able to notice patterns of classroom activity and using their knowledge of child development in general and their perceptions of the particular children in their classroom create practices to sustain learning. This approach to teaching requires innovation typically involves moving beyond existing routines and often requires teachers to rethink or restory key ideas, practices and values through the lens of child development theory in order to make changes in their practice that are likely to succeed (Shepard, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond & Rust, 2005:361; Kenyon & Randall, 1997).

Efficiency and innovation are assumed to be complementary at a global or policy level, but they can appear antagonistic at a local or classroom level. In practice, efficiency and innovation are antagonistic when efficiency truncates
innovation necessary for adaptive expertise and effective teaching. Efficiency and innovation are complementary in the classroom when efficiency makes room for innovation. Innovation grounded in child development theory is required for teachers to see the world through children’s eyes, positioning child development theory as a tool for understanding. The ability to see the world through children’s eyes to figure out how and why a child may have come to a surprising response is a reflective process, grounded in child development theory is one of the intellectual joys of teaching (Shepard, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond & Rust, 2005:362).

**Development of Children and Childhood**

School success requires a wide variety of culturally based behaviors, grounded in behavior and affect rather than academics, often privileging rich over poor and white over black children based on an ‘ease of fit.’ This perceived ease of fit is actually the product of parenting practices designed to equip children with the dispositions and manners necessary for school success, serving to improve or at least reproduce their parents’ social class location in adulthood (Ingersoll, 2004; Bourdieu, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976/2011).

Once compulsory schooling became institutionalized, the need to develop standardized pedagogies arose (Walkerdine, 1993). The study of children’s behavior emerged alongside state sponsored schooling when parenting strategies alone were insufficient for maintaining decorum in the classroom. The child study movement created the category of ‘the developing child,’ a necessity for nation-states, like the US, using compulsory public schooling to prepare a large, pliant workforce (Schwebel, 2004).
This section examines the development of children and childhood through the following lenses,

- Individual Development
- Ethnotheories
- Conceptions of Childhood
- Parenting Approaches

Human growth patterns are always situated within evolving, unpredictable and nested cultural contexts (Rogoff, 1991; Elkind, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1968).

**Individual Development:** The circumstances of children’s lives can, to the novice’s eye informed by their personal theories or ethnotheories alone, obscure developmental signposts frequently discussed in culturally distilled, universal stage theories typically taught in teacher education child development courses. This can create a disconnect between what novice teachers learned in their child development course and the individual children they teach (Cardwell, 2005). Unable to bridge the gap between child development theory and their classroom practice independently, novice teachers may use their personal theories or ethnotheories to fill the gap and guide their conceptions of and classroom practice with the ‘types’ of children in their classrooms to maintain their relationships with their students (Cardwell, 2005; Skovholt, 2004).

Universal child development stage theory rests on a normative study of children’s knowledge with white, middle-class European children as the ‘norm’ (Walkerdine, 1993). These normative child development theories rest on the construction of an idealized, universally developing individual person who doesn’t actually exist (Kuhn, 1979). This idealized orientation reflects and sustains the practice of identifying disinherit, disenfranchised people as disabled (Lave, 1996).
Recasting child development theory as a theory about how children develop within their sociocultural contexts as well as a method of understanding children’s behavior from the child’s perspective enacts the developmental nature of contemporary theories with a conception of development as a dynamic mediational tool teachers can use to understand their students’ meaning-making and social interactions in multiple contexts (Daiute, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978). The concept of mediation emphasizes the role of people, in this case, teachers, as intermediaries between the learner and the material to be learned (Kozulin, Miller, Gindis & Ageyev, 2003). For the purposes of this study, I view child development theory as a human mediational tool that novice teachers can use to understand their students’ behavior to help them learn (Kozulin Gindis, Ageyev & Miller, 2003). To expand this conception of developmental theory to include children’s experiences outside school, there is a growing body of research examining the role of culture and cultural tools in fostering school success (Steele, 2010; Lave, 1996; Rogoff, 1991; Vygotsky/Kozulin, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky’s (1924) early views on the role of culture in learning noted the need for explicit space to be left open for learners to construct and reconstruct themselves in the context of an experience to establish a personal connection to learning is central. In a more recent iteration, this explicitly open space has been referred to as a ‘third space’ where improvisation is possible (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez & Chiu, 1999) and buffer zone where the construction of knowledge through negotiation can emerge (Daiute, Buteau & Rawlins, 2001). These theories value and assume the learner’s active role along with the reality that the learner
approaches interactions with their own ethnotheories that can become resources teachers can use to construct academic lessons. These openings become spaces of possibility for novice teachers to story with ethnotheories and perhaps restory children’s behavior through the lens of child development theory (Kenyon & Randall, 1997).

People interact in the world primarily through the use of tools (pen, paper, computer) to master the physical world and signs (language, ideas, play) to mastery of themselves (Moll, 2000). In this study, the focus is on the use of psychological or cultural tools, like ethnotheories and child development theory, as an intermediary between the novice teacher understanding of children’s behavior (Vygotsky, 1978). This sociocultural view of development provides a portal to understanding children’s development as fundamentally social, dialogic, and situated in multiple cultural contexts, reflecting the realities of daily living rather than the idealized mythical individual typically discussed in conventional approaches to development (Kuhn, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978). An application of the sociocultural view of development is guided participation that links parenting practices and teaching. As such, children’s learning and development is a reciprocal, socially constructed cultural process that leaves explicit space for children to name their reality and connect their story with their classmates (Rogoff, Mistry, Goncu & Mosier, 1993). In this way children’s learning is promoted and sustained in a just classroom.

In the buffer zone, the learner takes up the work on their own terms using familiar cultural tools as vehicles to individualize and personalize public schooling as a culturally situated institution (Daiute, Buteau & Rawlins, 2001). This buffer zone
(Daiute, Buteau & Rawlins, 2001) or third space (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez & Chiu, 1999) permits each child to construct and reconstruct knowledge in relational contexts, through dialogue, argument and opposition to the developmental niche (Super & Harkness, 1993) place held open for them by society and by their parents (Daiute, Buteau & Rawlins, 2001). Activities, like narrating social issues in the classroom involve young children in extending their own reflections and awareness. Similarly, perhaps, generating narratives about child development theory and ethnotheories with novice teachers to create opportunities for them to extend their understanding of child development theory and themselves.

Ethnotheories: Parents’ conceptions of and beliefs about their children’s needs shape their parenting choices. An important role parents play in their children’s lives is sharing explicit and implicit cultural values. Ethnotheories are culturally based, experientially grounded, unconscious, beliefs, applied spontaneously, that guide adults’ interactions with children (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman, 2010; Edwards, Gandini, & Giovanni, 1996; Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Polanyi, 1968). As such, ethnotheories provide support for the cultural models parents provide for their children daily. These parenting choices are grounded in parents’ personal theories about their children’s needs that guide adults to behave in particular ways with children are called ethnotheories (Edwards, Gandini, & Giovanni, 1996; Goodnow & Collins, 1990).

Applying ethnotheories alone can provide guidance for teachers to help children navigate conflicts and relationships in the classroom that may control children’s behavior in the moment. However, there is a danger associated with
teaching based on ethnotheories alone. Ethnotheories reside in the realm of tacit and sometimes unconscious knowledge that is unarticulated and often un-interrogated. At the same time, ethnotheories can provide helpful insights in the classroom. However, these insights, devoid of child development theory, can cause unintended and lasting harm to children (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman, 2010). This means that teachers see children as extensions of themselves rather than the complex individuals they are. In so doing, they unwittingly supplant the child’s sociocultural context with their own (Vygotsky, 1978). An over reliance on ethnotheories alone, uninformed by child development theory may enable a novice teacher to compel their students’ compliance without realizing consequences to their students for their compliance (Saltman & Gabard, 2003; Kozol, 1991).

Relationships are a key element in adaptive expertise, innovative practice and effective teaching (Beishuizen, Hof, vanPatten, Bouwmeester & Asscher, 2001; Lortie, 1975). Children tend to take on the characteristics, explicit and tacit, that are valued by the adults in their lives and hold meaning for them. Research shows that, for both children and teachers, relationships with students keep teachers in the classroom (Lortie, 1975). Further, children see relationships with teachers, coupled with subject matter competence as markers of good teaching (Beishuizen, Hof, vanPatten, Bouwmeester & Asscher, 2001). At the same time, there is a limit on the value of relationships for children. Using child development theory can take teachers and parents out of relationship with each other. Because when teachers use child development theory they no longer share the same expectations of
children grounded in dominant cultural norms in the ways parents may (Edwards, Gandini, & Giovanni, 1996; Goodnow & Collins, 1990).

In the classroom, ethnotheories play a complicated and complicating role in teachers’ relationships with students and their parents. Ethnotheories can blur the sharp boundaries between home and school while simultaneously widening the division between parents’ and teachers’ perceptions (Cardwell, 2005). Teachers’ conceptions of children in general and perceptions of children’s needs in particular that guide classroom practice rest on their beliefs about learners’ minds (Ziv & Frye, 2004). Ideally, these beliefs about children’s minds are informed by generalized child development theories and teachers’ explicit, conscious ethnotheories, enabling them to construct a variety of teaching approaches using adaptive expertise to facilitate children’s learning with varied forms of instruction (Cardwell, 2005; Ziv & Frye, 2004; Tomasello, Kruger & Ratner, 1993:13).

**Conceptions of Childhood:** Being able to understand children through the multiple lenses of child development theory and ethnotheories requires a conscious understanding of how each novice teacher conceives of childhood. An idealized conception of childhood is characterized by innocence and vulnerability is familiar and long-standing (Walkerdine, 1997). Regardless of social status or even nation, this pervasive conception is one that children hold as well,

In June 1992, an eleven year old, caught up in the siege of Sarajevo wrote in her diary,

BOREDOM!!! SHOOTING!!! SHELLING!!! PEOPLE BEING KILLED!!! DESPAIR!!! HUNGER!!! MISERY!!! FEAR!!! That’s my life! The life of an innocent eleven year old schoolgirl!! A schoolgirl without a school, without the fun and excitement of school. A child without games, without friends, without the sun, without birds,
without nature, without fruit, without chocolate or sweets, with just a little powdered mild. In short, a child without a childhood.

Zlata had a clear sense of the ingredients of a childhood: innocence, school, fun, games, friends, nature, sweets. Deprived of these she can’t be a child – in essence for her, a child could only be a real child if they had a childhood (Cunningham, 1995/2005:1)

Zlata’s clarity on her identity as a child is clearly grounded in a familiar conception of childhood as a time of innocence, plentiful resources, play, protection, and psychological ease.

The first conception of childhood, prior to the 16th century, placed little importance was placed on childhood as a distinct phase of life. Once children emerged from infancy, able to walk and take care of their bodily functions independently, children were seen and dressed like miniature adults. As such, they were exposed to all aspects of adult life in preparation for adulthood. Adults passed culture on by modeling and immersing children in it. In this way, culture was both replicated and transformed through children’s daily observation and participation. For example, gambling in taverns was a favorite past time for seven-year-olds (Postman, 1994).

The second conception of childhood emerged with the birth of Protestantism in the 16th century; children became a source of theoretical interest because the new Protestants, known as Puritans, believed that children were born tainted by the original sin. As such, children needed harsh, restrictive parenting practices to tame the tainted, depraved impulses of the child (Postman, 1994; Aries, 1965).

The third conception of childhood emerged in the 17th century Enlightenment, emphasizing the ideals of human dignity and respect. In this context, the child was
seen as a tabula rasa, or blank slate, completely open to being shaped by all-powerful adults. Children needed rational tutors, molding them by using careful instruction, modeling and rewards for good behavior (Berger, 2004; Postman, 1994).

The fourth conception of childhood emerged in the 18th century, dividing childhood into the four stages of development we use today,

1. Infancy
2. Childhood
3. Late childhood
4. Adolescence

In this last conception, children are seen as innately moral with unique ways of thinking that would be harmed by too much adult intervention and training (Berger, 2004; Postman, 1994; Aries, 1965). It advances the view that children needed guidance and support through negotiation in a socially interactive relationship with adults. These four conceptions of childhood and children carry suggestions on the appropriate roles of adults, specifically parents,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptions of Children &amp; Childhood</th>
<th>Adult Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miniature Adults</td>
<td>Guided participation, teaching by observing and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trial and error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tainted by Original Sin</td>
<td>Harsh discipline to eradicate the taint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank Slate/Tabula Rasa</td>
<td>Rational teachers, molding children to their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innately Moral</td>
<td>Guidance and support through negotiation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three of these four early conceptions of children and childhood outline corresponding parenting role that links on to the three school systems (Schwebel, 2004).

**Table 1.5 – School Systems, Conceptions of Children and Adult Roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School System</th>
<th>Conceptions of Children</th>
<th>Adult Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>Innately Moral</td>
<td>Facilitator and negotiator so as not to corrupt the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>Blank Slate</td>
<td>All-powerful to shape the child’s character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custodial</td>
<td>Tainted by Original Sin</td>
<td>Harshly corrective to eradicate the taint.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Parenting Approaches:** The choices adults make about how they view and parent children has implications for children’s life outcomes. The ways in which children are treated at home and school socializes children to know their ‘place’ at home and in society. The location held open for the child by parents and the school is a developmental niche (Super & Harkness, 1993).

Researchers have identified characteristics of four typical parenting styles and how they can shape children’s life outcomes (Baumrind, 1991; Lareau, 2003),

**Table 1.6 – Parenting Styles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baumrind’s Characteristics of Parenting Styles</th>
<th>Indulgent</th>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Uninvolved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Warmth</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Expectations of Maturity</td>
<td>Warmth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indulgent</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninvolved</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These four styles and characteristics assume that parents’ role is to influence and control their children. Each of these four parenting styles represents a set of beliefs
about how parents influence their children that has long-term consequences for children's life outcomes (Berger, 2004; Baumrind, 1991).

**Table 1.7 – Parenting Styles and Consequences for Children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting Styles</th>
<th>Consequences for Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indulgent</td>
<td>Children from indulgent families are more likely to exhibit problem behaviors and not perform well in school although they have high self-esteem, better social skills, and low levels of depression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>Children from authoritarian families seem to perform moderately well in school and don’t exhibit problem behaviors. At the same time, they have weak social skills, low self-esteem, and high levels of depression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Children from authoritative families seem to be competent in all domains, performing well academically, exhibiting strong social skills and self-esteem with low levels of depression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninvolved</td>
<td>Children from uninvolved families seem to perform poorly in all domains, with poor academic performance, weak social skills, high levels of behavior problems and high levels of depression.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Balancing clear, high expectations with emotional responsiveness and recognition of children’s autonomy is one of the most consistent family predictors of children’s competence from early childhood through early adolescence (Berger, 2004; Baumrind, 1991).

The authoritative parenting approach views the child as innately moral, assuming that the child has something of value to contribute to the relationship. This provides an approach that supports an interactive, culturally situated conception of development. Authoritative parenting is consistently associated as well as high academic and social competence with low levels of problem behaviors among boys and girls across developmental stages. More to the point, children from homes using an authoritative parenting approach appear to be able to balance external
conformity and achievement demands with their own need for individuation and autonomy (Baumrind, 1991).

An examination of the intersection between social class and parenting practices revealed a binary parenting typology outlining the strengths and weaknesses of both (Lareau, 2003: 31),
Table 1.8 – Typology of Child Rearing Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Elements</th>
<th>Child-Rearing Approach</th>
<th>Accomplishment of Natural Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concerted Cultivation</td>
<td>Parent actively fosters and assesses child’s talents, opinions, and skills</td>
<td>Parent cares for child and allows child to grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of Daily Life</td>
<td>Multiple child leisure activities orchestrated by adults</td>
<td>“Hanging out,” particularly with kin, by child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Use</td>
<td>Reasoning/directives Child contestation of adult statements; Extended negotiations between parents and child</td>
<td>Directives Rare questioning or challenging of adults by child; General acceptance by child of directives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions in Institutions</td>
<td>Criticisms and interventions on behalf of the child; Training of child to take on this role</td>
<td>Dependence on institutions; Sense of powerlessness and frustration; Conflict between child-rearing practices at home and at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Emerging sense of entitlement on the part of the child</td>
<td>Emerging Sense of constraint on the part of the child.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Working class families tend toward a naturalist approach and middle class families tend to choose concerted cultivation, (Lareau, 2003: 31). With increased time for unstructured play, working class children have more opportunities for imaginative, self-directed independent play that encourages creativity, problem solving and self-regulation. However, in school, they tend to encounter a pedagogy that encourages punctuality, basic skills with little opportunity make use of the capacities the children develop outside school, which can lead to a sense of constraint and powerlessness within institutions.
Using concerted cultivation, middle class parents provide their children with numerous, organized extracurricular activities and numerous opportunities to engage in extended negotiations with their parents. This parenting approach can create a challenge for middle class children in school when they encounter a pedagogy that values creative play and independent and small group problem solving. There is a mismatch between the children’s home parenting and the expectations of their school. There seems to be a mismatch between children’s social class based parenting approaches and the pedagogy they tend to encounter in the schools they attend. This possible mismatch between home and school can be particularly challenging if children encounter a teacher equipped with routine expertise and less likely to adapt their practice to meet children’s varied needs. Due to the role of creative play, these parenting practices can create a challenging fit for working class children in the worker school system and for middle class children in the elite school system (Schwebel, 2004; Bourdieu, 1977). The complex weave of dominant cultural values to avoid conflict and silence differences in the unconscious tacit realm of ethnotheories can pose a challenge to the need for the conscious explicit use of child development and informed by the resources of conscious ethnotheories. The purpose and goal of teaching at its best is to further learning and justice in the classroom by engaging in practices that meet each individual child’s needs.

**Chapter Summary**
The ill effects of poverty on children’s development (McLoyd, 1998) profoundly shape children’s experiences, view of themselves, how they see the world and their life chances. This important reality doesn’t always find easy entry into the classroom. Children living in poverty are exposed to more extreme environmental conditions than children living more comfortable circumstances (McLoyd, 1998) and as such their views of social situations differ and teachers need to make space in discussions and school work for them to be named. At the same time, children can suffer unmet needs in any environment regardless of how comfortable they may appear. Further, narrative is particularly useful for children of color because they need to be known and become knowledgeable about others’ perspectives, engage in the classroom community, for their own survival, and development (Daiute, 2004; Daiute, Buteau & Rawlins, 2001).

Children can use narrative as a buffer zone or improvisational third space (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez & Chiu, 1999), to construct links between their culturally based tacit knowledge, social wisdom and the dominant school culture of secularized Protestantism (Nasaw, 1979; Polanyi, 1966/2010). Their narratives represent a negotiation among diverse value systems that are uniquely and intimately tied to each individual child’s life. In this way, teachers promote learning and justice when they enable children to develop the capacity to break silences by naming their experiences; interrupt isolation by maintaining relationships and interrogating conflict, which dismantles social exclusion and civilized oppression. In this way, culture, narrative and relationship develop multiple forms of
higher order thinking skills a critical component of increased learning (Daiute, 2014; Daiute, Buteau & Rawlins, 2001).

This layered examination of development at the societal, institutional and individual levels provides a frame from which to understand novice teachers’ beliefs about the usefulness of child development theory in varied school contexts. The behaviorist notion, ‘what we know shapes what we do,’ supports the reciprocity of developmental interaction (Nager & Shapiro, 2000). Adults’ interactions with children shape the adults they will become. Similarly, cooperating teachers and teacher education mentors’ interactions with novice teachers can shape their professional development.

When there is a conflict between the needs of the individual child and the needs of the state on behalf of the ‘greater good,’ the teacher is expected to advance the needs of the state even if doing so comes at the expense of the individual child. This stance can and often does leave teachers and parents at odds with each other (Edwards, Gandini & Govanni, 1996).

Developmental knowledge is to a teacher what anatomy and physiology is to a physician because child development provides the underlying understanding of how children think, behave, learn and grow. Equipped with this foundational knowledge, novice teachers can use it to guide what they focus on and how they look at and interpret children’s behavior to shape their pedagogical and curricular choices for individual children and the class as a whole (Horowitz, Darling–Hammond & Bransford, 2005:118).
In the classroom, teachers can react to and control children’s behavior in the moment with ethnotheories alone but struggle to explain the behavior and what gave rise to it due to the tacit nature of ethnotheories. Child development theory coupled with interrogated, explicit ethnotheories become resources that can mediate novice teachers’ perceptions of children’s behavior because it can provide a ‘third space’ for understanding children’s behaviors and motivations that fall outside novice teachers’ experiences (Cardwell, 2005; Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez & Chiu, 1999).

Teaching also rests on teachers’ beliefs about the nature of the learner’s mind where teaching is an intentional activity designed to increase the learner’s knowledge, reducing the difference between teacher and students’ knowledge. Teaching becomes possible when teachers notice a lack of knowledge because without an attribution of ignorance then there is no need for teachers to teach (Ziv & Frye, 2004).

A dynamic understanding and use of child development theory helps novice teachers build adaptive expertise that balances innovation and efficiency in their classroom practice. A dynamic child development theory also encourages novice teachers to view the children in their classrooms as a group of complex individuals, each with a unique perspective and set of needs (Daiute, 2014; Kuhn, 1979). Attending to children as complex individuals interrupts civilized oppression because everyone has a chance to be known, received, cared for and taught in ways that make sense to each child (Nieto, 2003; Harvey, 1999; Noddings, 1992).

A sociocultural view of child development theory provides a portal to understanding children’s development as fundamentally social, dialogic, mediated
and situated in multiple cultural contexts, which reflect the realities of daily living rather than the idealized mythical individual typically discussed in conventional approaches to development (Daiute, 2014; Kuhn, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978). Focusing on teaching novice teachers to use child development theory in this way can support and encourage them to develop adaptive expertise and innovative practice by learning how and when to adjust their pedagogy to help each individual child learn. The concept of mediation emphasizes the role of people in this proposed study, teachers, as intermediaries placed between the learner and the material to be learned (Kozulin, Miller, Gindis & Ageyev, 2003; Dewey, 1900/2001). Child development theory individualized by conscious explicit ethnotheories is a human meditational tool that novice teachers can use to develop adaptive expertise, understand their students’ behavior to increase learning and justice in their classrooms (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev & Miller, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). These ideas constitute theoretical context that supports this research study. The next chapter outlines the research methodology I used in this study.
Chapter 2
Research Methodology

The hottest placed in hell are reserved for those who, in times of great moral crisis, maintain their neutrality.
Dante Alighieri, Poet (1265-1321)

Overview

I am a teacher educator interested in learning how to better prepare novice teachers to use the full range of professional funds of knowledge to improve academic achievement and reduce the ‘brain drain’ of the high incarceration rates (Alexander, 2012). This qualitative study examined 12 participants’ views about child development theory as a mediator of classroom practice to increase learning and justice in diverse educational contexts. I wanted to understand the participants’ beliefs about child development theory in the context of their ethnotheories and professional knowledge to gain insight on the connections they might make between child development theory and classroom practice.

A common complaint among novice teachers is they don’t see the need to learn child development theory because it seems so disconnected from the children they work with. I was concerned that if novice teachers were reluctant to learn and use child development theory they would rely on their ethnotheories. Without child development theory as an operative fund of knowledge to inform their practice, I worried that children’s individuality and humanity can be overlooked if novice teachers compel children’s compliance to appear expert without expertise (Skovholt, 2004; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003).
The goal of this research was to learn about the participants’ perspectives to inform my approach to teaching novice teachers child development theory. I used two research philosophies to frame my methodological approach in this study, constructivism and pragmatism,

**Table 2.1 – Methodological Philosophies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructivism</th>
<th>Pragmatism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Problem centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple participant meanings</td>
<td>Real-world practice oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and historical construction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory generation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Problem**

Despite more than 10 years of educational reform to close a widening achievement gap between rich and poor; black and white children, the results indicate that NCLB hasn’t worked and has in fact increased the very achievement gap it was supposed to close. Sadly, the current Race to the Top reform efforts hasn’t improved academic achievement either (Reardon, 2012; Ravitch, 2011).

The societal consequences of this continuing failure is evident in the fact that the United States incarcerates more of its citizens than any other nation by far despite decreasing crime rates (Alexander, 2012). School failure is linked to increased incarceration rates. If a child is retained in grade once in elementary school, they are 50% more likely to be incarcerated. If a child is retained two or more times at anytime in their school career, they are 90% more likely to be incarcerated (Giroux, 1993). Incarceration, time in prison, limits a person’s ability to fully participate in US society – work and vote, relegating so many to social
exclusion (Kahn & Kammerman, 2001). The majority of people who are incarcerated are black and brown from urban areas (Alexander, 2012).

Increasingly, urban public schools use methods of interacting with children that deny their humanity by isolating and silencing children’s questions to compel unquestioning obedience with an authoritarian pedagogy (Schwebel, 2004; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003; Baumrind, 1991). Using an authoritarian pedagogy suggests that these adults view these children as tainted and in need of ‘fixing’ in order to become worthy of social inclusion (Postman, 1994; Aries, 1965). To achieve this, there is a prevalence of zero tolerance policies, lock downs, police presence that disciplines black and brown children more frequently than white sending black and brown children through the court system 70% (Alexander, 2012). Teachers, lacking an understanding of this broader context can unwittingly perpetuate structural injustice through civilized oppression by enforcing school rules and existing policies without question (Young, 2011; 2007; Harvey, 1999).

Framing the context of my study in this way emerges from my own ethnotheories, classroom teaching, research and teacher education experience. Through this lens, education in general and teaching in particular are political and culturally situated (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Nieto, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Using a layered approach to understanding the context of education is mirrored in the layered approach I’ve chosen for data collection and analysis (Bronfenbrenner, 1979/2006). The choices I’ve made in framing this study, the research questions and methodological choices are anchored in my professional beliefs,

Every child needs an advocate. Teaching and learning at their best take place within the context of trusting, resilient relationships. I believe the
commitment to a socially just, equitable school community needs to be reflected in relationships among adults that serve as models for children to emulate. Children need a secure, caring, and intellectually stimulating atmosphere in which to mature cognitively, emotionally, artistically, physically, and socially with a choice and voice in what and how they learn. Classroom curricula needs to be rigorous and challenging but not impossible, leaving room for children’s experiences, interests, questions and curiosities to customize what they learn in a democratic community. Framing what children learn within a broader cultural context of experience anchors new knowledge in concrete, purposeful, unforgettable ways. Central to this approach are teachers’ and leaders’ ability to understand the world through children’s eyes.

**Research Question and Sub-questions**

The research question and sub-questions for this research study emerged from the lessons I learned from an earlier pilot study (Cardwell, 2005). Initially, I noticed a trend among my child development students working in predominantly black, urban public elementary schools. They questioned whether theories of human development applied to their students. This questioning of the applicability of child development to low-income children of color seemed linked to a deeper, yet silenced question, of whether their students were fully human.

As a child development course instructor, I saw it as my role to learn more about my graduate students’ perceptions and beliefs so that I could in turn engage these novice teachers provocatively and productively with child development theory so that they could engage equally well with the diverse children they would teach. To accomplish this, I designed a small-scale pilot study to address the following research question:

What are beginning or novice urban teachers’ beliefs about the usefulness of child development theories in understanding their students’ behavior in predominantly black public elementary schools?

From this overarching question, I raised the following sub-questions:
1. How do novice teachers make sense of their students' behavior?
2. What do novice teachers remember from their child development courses?
3. What connections, if any, do novice teachers make between child development theory and their classroom practice?

I explored these questions with a semi-structured interview protocol with a group of voluntary novice teachers to surface the connections they might have made between their child development theory course and their students' behavior (Seidman, 1991; Baltes, Reese, Nesselroade, 1988; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Erikson, 1979).

I designed this interview protocol as a way to learn about the teachers’ theories in use and espoused theories regarding child development through the use of narrative in the interview protocol and eliciting the participants’ narrative responses. I was able to surface these multiple approaches by using a vignette in a pre/post research design (Daiute, 2014; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). The vignette narrative I used is included below depicts a situation familiar to all teachers that can be credibly linked with many different interpretations,

At the end of the day, Jason's teacher confided to a colleague, "I just can't call his name one more time." Jason attends an all boys private school and lives in the Bronx. Like a number of his classmates, he has a tutor but isn't in any serious academic trouble. In one-on-one interactions, he is charming and funny. During large group transitions or class line-ups, there are times when he screams, hits, or pushes his classmates. Lastly, his mother has called several of the boys in his class to try and arrange a time to play outside school but her requests have been turned down or ignored. What might be going on here and what could be some of the long-term consequences for Jason?

In the earlier pilot study, I focused on public school teachers. As such, I was sensitive to the reality that they often shoulder much of the public scorn for failing schools and poor student achievement and situating the vignette in a private school context and asking the participants to offer the teacher advice allowed them to
hypothesize about teaching and children without having to be responsible for the circumstances that gave rise to the events in the vignette (Cardwell, 2005).

After asking for the participants to interpret the vignette at the beginning of the interview to elicit their theories in use or working knowledge of child development theory, I asked each participant a series of open-ended questions about children, child development and good teaching to learn about their professional beliefs and espoused theories. I then asked if the participants wanted to modify their initial narrative interpretation of the vignette to see if answering questions about what they learned in their teacher preparation program might prompt them to change or restory their initial interpretations. I wondered if engaging novice teachers in a guided reflection about children, child development theory and good teaching would provide sufficient scaffolding for novice teachers to use child development theory as a mediator of their ethnotheories and children’s behavior (Daiute, 2014; Kenyon & Randall, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978).

I found that for these participants there was a difference between their pre and post interview interpretations,

**Table 2.2 - Initial and Revised Vignette Interpretations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Revisited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imani</td>
<td>Jason has a little problem with social skills</td>
<td>Just give them something to do; talk to them; you’ll find out it’s not, with the outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>Might be a bully; needs help but doesn’t know how to ask for it.</td>
<td>Talk to Jason; find out what’s on Jason’s mind; Is Jason frustrated because something is wrong at home or is Jason frustrated over something that’s going on after school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliza</td>
<td>Hard to say. If it is deep seated anger then that goes beyond the</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>It could be anything from hygiene to ADHD. Slow social skill development; likes being the center of attention; other kids might be jealous of him.</td>
<td>Look with a bird’s eye view of the situation; considering herself as well as the child; it’s gotta be a constant reflective process; step outside yourself really for a moment and look at what you’re doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>He’s having trouble with his peers; trouble understanding peer relationships; acting up in group situations.</td>
<td>I’m just curious as to why he has a tutor; if he’s needing more positive social situations to really help him working one on one is really not facilitating that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants from my earlier pilot study tended to view ‘Jason’ through a diagnostic lens, describing him as a child having ‘problems with social skills’ in need of reminders about how to treat his classmates. Their revisited vignette interpretations demonstrated a significant shift away from diagnosing Jason’s ‘problem’ to a more developmental approach where the participants raised questions about what motivated Jason to behave as he did in an effort to more fully understand Jason’s behavior in the context of the situation through his eyes. In this way, child development seemed to mediate these participants' perceptions of the vignette narrative.

Although the pilot study sample size was too small to support generalizable findings, it did offer some insights about the flexibility of novice teachers' perceptions about the usefulness of child development theory as a mediator. Despite their initial, diagnostic approach, I was struck by their ability to shift their interpretations after answering questions about children, child development theory and good teaching toward using child development theory despite their mixed feelings about its usefulness. These participants were diverse in their backgrounds and college majors but seemed to respond similarly to the interview. This convergence of beliefs...
from a diverse sample suggested that their shared professional knowledge was their frame of reference.

I thought that their student teaching experiences would play a dominant role in shaping their thinking about the usefulness of child development theory. From this, I hypothesized that student teaching placements shaped novice teachers' beliefs about the usefulness of child development theory more so than the graduate school based teacher preparation coursework because it was a shared, hands-on experience where they applied child development theory with individual children. I further hypothesized that the school-based staff, through mentoring and modeling, also influenced novice teachers' beliefs about the usefulness of child development theory.

In my earlier pilot study, I found that child development theory functioned as a mediator in the participants' interpretations of a vignette narrative and I wanted to examine this further in my current study. Specifically, the participants shifted from diagnosing and fixing Jason to figuring out what was motivating his behavior and what it might mean to Jason. Additionally, there was a shift in the pilot study participants' tone toward Jason. At first, the participants felt they knew enough to make a decision about what was going on in the vignette but in their revisited interpretations the participants wanted to know more about the situation and understand more about Jason.

In constructing the research question for my current study, I wanted to examine these insights further in the following research question for this study,

How does child development theory mediate classroom practice toward increasing learning and justice across diverse educational contexts?
To examine this research question, I used the same overall research design and interview protocol with an expanded sample of novice teachers working in varied school settings, private, public and charter schools. The following sub-questions outline more specific lines of inquiry,

1. What are novice teachers’ beliefs about their students?
2. What are novice teachers’ beliefs about child development?
3. How might novice teachers’ field placements influence their beliefs about the usefulness of child development theory?
4. What are novice teachers’ beliefs about good teaching?
5. How might novice teachers interpret their students’ behavior?
6. What funds of knowledge do they use to make these interpretations?
7. What are novice teachers’ beliefs about the usefulness of child development theories in understanding their students’ behavior in diverse school placements?

The combination of my overarching research question and sub-questions created a guide to support my research design and methods.

**Research Design and Methods**

This is a qualitative research design that relies on a qualitative interview protocol for data collection and initial data analysis to explore the participants’ beliefs about the usefulness of child development theory with an imbedded pre/post design. I gathered the data in this study in 12 face-to-face tape-recorded interviews that were later transcribed and 10 of which were fully analyzed. I imbedded a pre/post element in the interview protocol by asking each participant to interpret a vignette prior to answering any questions about children, child development and good teaching. After answering these questions, I then asked the participants a series of questions about their conceptions of children, their beliefs about the usefulness of
child development theory and their conceptions of good teaching. I asked the participants if they wanted to revisit their initial vignette interpretations to modify them in any way.

My data collection approach was informed by my desire to create a mutually beneficial interview experience for the participants and for me. A major concern for many novice teachers is the lack of time they have to reflect on their practice so they can make conscious, informed choices and learn from their mistakes. Because of my interest in and the possible role of ethnotheories in practice, I chose to make use of the ‘interviewer effect’ to enhance the quality of data I collected (Weiss, 1995; Seidman, 1991). I realized that participating in this research was an imposition on the participants’ time and therefore I created an experience of reflection that the participants would see as a productive use of their time. It was also an effort to embrace the notion of qualitative interviewing as an intervention in the participants’ experiences they allowed me to learn from (Weiss, 1995; Seidman, 1991).

I designed the interview to learn about the participants’ views about child development, and as such I chose to elicit their working definitions. I made this choice based on what I learned from conceptualizing my earlier pilot study (Cardwell, 2005). At first, I saw child development theory as a body of content to be learned and mastered, residing outside the novice teachers’ and my sphere of influence. However in the process of teaching child development and thinking about how to learn more about what novice teachers thought about child development, I found myself thinking about child development theory in more fluid, evolving and permeable ways to help my students connect with the content I was teaching. It was
this latter conceptualization of child development that I used to begin this research study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; McEwan & Egan, 1995; Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995).

I developed the following model to represent my thinking and the iterative nature process I see among my graduate students taking child development,

**Table 2.3 – Initial Theoretical Model**

The process that seemed to be unfolding was teachers enter with their ethnotheories about children, who they are and why they do what they do. In child development, students may encounter child development theory as both method and content in order to make explicit connections between their ethnotheories and child development theory, which can then mediate their interpretations of children’s behavior. Ideally over the course of the semester, there is an expansion of their ethnotheories to incorporate child development theory to mediate their perceptions of children’s behavior and perhaps shaping the pedagogical choices that they make in their student teaching placements. My approach to data analysis was designed to preserve the layered complexity I used in constructing my literature review, research questions and data collection.
Data Collection

I interviewed the participants in this study rather than distribute a questionnaire for them to fill out on their own as a potential incentive for participants as well as to collect more nuanced data in a narrative interview than I could gather in a distributed questionnaire. From my own experience as a classroom teacher, distributing questionnaires for teachers to answer and return on their own would have placed the responsibility on the prospective participants to carve out the time to answer questions and then find a way to return the questionnaire to me, which would probably feel like more work on top of a very heavy workload to begin with, especially for novice teachers. Although an interview is time-consuming, if successful, an interview can serve as an opportunity for participants to reflect out loud and tease out their own thinking about children, child development theory and good teaching with an interested, attentive listener.

The interviews lasted for approximately one hour with one exception. There was one interview that lasted 3.5 hours. To allow for these possibilities, I preferred to schedule one interview per day but made exceptions to accommodate the participants’ schedules. Time was an issue because I scheduled these interviews during winter break, at a time when there were no classes held at River College. Timing the interviews in this way was important because it provided an added layer of privacy protection to preserve the participants’ anonymity. Logistically, I was able to more easily secure a private interview space for each interview although it wasn’t the same space each time. One consequence of changing interview spaces were technical difficulties that caused the loss of most of two interview recordings.
**Interview Protocol:** I used a pre/post design, asking participants to interpret a vignette prior to any questions and then again after they answered the interview questions. This positioned the interview questions as an explicit intervention. The pre/post model rests on a conception of learning as socially situated in a co-constructed sociocultural context (Vygotsky, 1978). The data I collected captured a snapshot of the participants’ beliefs at a ripe moment in time when they can express who they are while revealing who they may become (Bateson, 1990).

The questions I asked the participants (Appendix A) were designed to elicit their views on child development theory as an evolving and useful fund of professional knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Weiss, 1995; Seidman, 1991). I conceptualized child development theory broadly, allowing the participants to define it because I was interested in the participants’ working definitions that might reveal how they used child development theory in their student teaching placements after completing a course in child development as a part of their teacher preparation program (Cardwell, 2005). As such, it was important that the participants in this study had completed child development and were teaching so they could fully engage in a guided reflection with me about their practice, students, colleagues and aspirations. The interview protocol is structured in the following way,

1. Initial Vignette Interpretation
2. Questions about participants’ teacher preparation experience
   - Their motivations for entering teaching
   - Participants’ views about child development
   - Participants’ perceptions of the children they work with
   - Participants’ views on good teaching
3. Revisited Vignette Interpretation (Optional)
4. Participants’ perceptions of their colleagues’ views about child development
5. Demographic questions
Participants' descriptions of themselves-racially and ethnically
Participants’ socioeconomic status growing up and currently
Participants’ current professional identity
Ways participants would describe themselves that I didn’t ask

The interview protocol relied on self-reported data. I decided to offer the participants a purposefully sketchy description of a child outside their context so that they could engage in an act of hypothesizing about a student's behavior (Schwarz, 1999). To accomplish this, I used a vignette narrative that I used in my child development course as well as in my earlier pilot study.

I began each interview by providing each participant with a printed version of the vignette narrative alone that they could read, have read to them or both. I did this because I realize that people process new information in varied ways and I wanted to make the vignette narrative easily accessible,

At the end of the day, Jason's teacher confided to a colleague, "I just can't call his name one more time." Jason attends an all boys private school and lives in the Bronx. Like a number of his classmates, he has a tutor but isn't in any serious academic trouble. In one-on-one interactions, he is charming and funny. During large group transitions or class line-ups, there are times when he screams, hits, or pushes his classmates. Lastly, his mother has called several of the boys in his class to try and arrange a time to play outside school but her requests have been turned down or ignored. What might be going on here and what could be some of the long-term consequences for Jason?

I chose a private school setting to facilitate urban public school teachers' hypothesizing about a circumstance outside their school contexts. Further, for those participants working in private schools, they may feel comfortable enough to hypothesize about a child in private school who wasn’t attending their school. This vignette narrative called forth multiple funds of professional knowledge among the participants as they shared possible interpretations of what might have been going
This vignette narrative is purposely vague to leave overt spaces available for participants to offer their own interpretations (Daiute, 2014; Schwarz, 1999; Vygotsky, 1924). I anticipated five main directions the participants' interpretations might take,

1. Focus on the teacher,
2. Focus on Jason,
3. Use a combined focus on Jason and his teacher,
4. Focus on Jason and his relationships with his classmates, and
5. Focus on the interaction between Jason and his teacher within the context of Jason's classmates.

I asked each participant to interpret this vignette narrative, guided by a series of open-ended questions,

What do you think might be going on here?
What advice might you offer the teacher?
What do you think is going on here? (problem)
What advice would you offer this teacher? (advice)
Have you had any experiences like this?
    What happened? (example)
    What did you do? (strategies)

Interpreting this vignette narrative invited the participants to engage in an activity with me that required mediation, in this case interpreting the meaning of a child's behavior. The interview protocol questions would elicit the participants' beliefs and I hoped the vignette narrative would elicit the participants' use of child development theory and ethnotheories to attach meaning to the events described in the vignette (Daiute, 2014).

In the initial vignette interpretation, I asked participants to construct and attach meaning to the behaviors described in the vignette, using what they know in service to this task prior to answering any questions about their professional preparation and practice. When the participants finished their initial interpretations, I
asked them questions about their school experiences as children; their graduate school experiences, focusing on child development; good teaching and types of children they encounter in the classroom to elicit their beliefs about the usefulness of child development theory. With these questions answered, I invited each participant to revisit their initial interpretation to see if they want to modify it in light of the questions they had just answered (Schwarz, 1999; Kozulin, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978).

In the last section of the interview, I asked the participants to describe themselves demographically (Steele, 2010). The interview concludes by asking participants to provide any additional information they thought would be important to better understand their responses or additional information about their identities that is important to them that I didn’t ask for. This data was analyzed with qualitative analysis strategies to surface the patterns, nuances, and surprises of the participants’ responses on their own terms and in relation to the research question and sub-questions.

**Entry:** In this research study, I occupied a fraught location. I was a member of the community I was examining and learning about. As is the case with all identities, mine is layered, complex and nuanced. To start, I am a teacher educator who teaches child development theory. From this location, my research is selfish in that I want to figure out how to teach my course in such a way that my students will end the course understanding and using child development everyday in their classrooms with every child. I am also a teacher educator of color, which tends to locate me on the borders of teacher education, an ‘outsider within’ (Ladson-Billings, 2006). From this location, I can use my experience as insight because I have
intimate knowledge of the work but am removed sufficiently to be able to raise
critical questions about teaching child development and pursue lines of inquiry to
examine the intersection of social development and social justice (Cardwell, 2005).

This location created some ethical dilemmas regarding voluntary participation
and informed consent. My institutional role was a source of serious concern for the
Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Graduate Center, City University of New York
and the Institutional Research Review Board (IRRB) at River College of Education\(^1\).
I addressed those important concerns by adopting a low-key approach to participant
recruitment. Specifically, none of my current students in any of my courses could
participate in this study. Beyond that, I devised recruitment strategies to minimize
directly soliciting student participation. I used pre-existing pathways to recruit
participants by distributing information flyers to students through their advisors.

If students were interested they responded to me directly. If they weren’t
interested then they just didn’t respond. By distributing my flyer in this way meant
that it was one among other flyers from varied sources including other faculty
members, which positioned the study more firmly as one option they could respond
to or not without consequence. Further, neither the advisors nor I followed up with
their students to see if they responded to any of the flyers.

**Recruitment:** I posted a flyer on student information bulletin boards as a
reminder. My recruitment strategies were purposely passive and contained no plan
to follow-up with students who expressed an interest in participating more than once
to minimize the coercive effects of my position as a faculty member. The
consequences of this more passive approach did result in a small number of

\(^1\) This is a pseudonym.
participants for this study, but it was a necessary sacrifice to ensure participants’ voluntary participation.

Once I identified the population from which I would recruit participants, I distributed flyers to all the general teacher education advisors in their mailboxes with enough flyers so that each advisee could have one. As discussed earlier, this approach to distributing information to graduate students enrolled in fieldwork is typical at River College and there is no follow-up expected or needed from the advisor after they distribute the material. This existing practice was helpful for my particular needs to not have students feel pressured into participating. Initially, I planned to hold open information meetings for interested students to attend but that plan didn’t work out well because it was hard to find a time when groups could come. Instead, I made myself available to meet with anyone individually who had questions about participating in the study by telephone, email or face-to-face meeting, whichever the prospective participant found easiest for them.

This recruitment approach yielded a number of inquiries from interested graduate students. Listed below is a chart outlining how it unfolded,

**Table 2.4 - Recruitment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressed Interest</th>
<th>Made Appointments for Interviews</th>
<th>Kept Interview Appointments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was during this recruitment process that I became aware of the role the economy held in my research study. Of the initial 35 students who expressed interest, five decided they didn’t want to participate for reasons they didn’t share. Of the remaining 30, eight found they couldn’t fit in an hour-long interview because of their
work commitments because they held other jobs in addition to teaching. In scheduling appointments, I was flexible and willing to make appointments during the week and on Saturdays but they didn’t have the time because they needed to work in order to make ends meet. There were 22 graduate students who said they were interested, made appointments. Four didn’t show up for their appointment and six students canceled their appointments. Of this group of ten who expressed interest but didn’t participate in the study, eight were students of color working full time, taking care of their families in addition to attending graduate school and working. In the end, I interviewed twelve participants for this study.

**Population, Sample and Participants:** The population for this study is graduate students enrolled in a teacher education masters degree program leading to state certification. In addition, all participants will have taken a course in child development and work in a classroom at least 3 days per week. There were approximately 80 students I identified as meeting this criterion. The 80 students represent the total number of students eligible to participate in this study. However, I expected to have and had significantly fewer participants due to my admittedly low-key recruitment efforts and it is rare to have 100% of eligible participants actually participate. I anticipated a 20% to 30% positive response rate, perhaps a generous estimation and had a 15% participation rate with twelve participants.

The participants worked in a variety of school settings, public, private and charter schools. Although the eligible population age range was early 20s to mid 50s, the participants in this study were between 24 and 35 years old (Appendix B). Some are recent college graduates and teaching is their first job while for others
teaching is a chosen career after one or two previous careers. Mirroring the larger population of teachers, the student body is predominantly white, middle-class and female with small populations of white men as well as men and women of color, and international students (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

**Technical Difficulties:** To record the interviews, I used a small, standard sized tape recorder with 90-minute tapes. To ensure a high quality sound for transcription, I used a floor microphone so that the interviewee wouldn’t feel constricted or risk getting tangled in wires. To avoid technical difficulties, I changed batteries and sound checked prior to each interview. There four were times when I had to change my interview location unexpectedly and couldn’t complete my routine equipment checks. On two of those occasions, my equipment failed to record the entire interview clearly. The technical aspect of interviewing turned out to be very challenging. In hindsight, I was most interested in the substance of the interviews and engaging with the participants. I was secondarily focused on the equipment. Perhaps this is an indication of my own focus on getting the research process ‘right’ at the expense of the technical aspects of recording it for later analysis. Overall, two of the 12 interviews were affected by technical difficulties. Unfortunately due to their tight schedules, these participants were unavailable to be re-interviewed. After each interview, I reflected on what I remembered from the interview and what I thought about it. I realized that my memory of the interviews didn’t reflect the participants’ views but rather my own. This enabled me to begin to tease apart my interpretive lens from the participants’ views for data analysis.

**Data Analysis**
My literature review provided support for my analytic model. I used organized Uri Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model of Development (1979/2006) to structure my literature review and analytic frame. This layered, socioculturally situated view of people and development informed the design of this study, the data collection and data analysis (Vygotsky, 1978). The interview protocol was a tool for both data collection and initial data analysis. I used this approach because I wanted to map the twists and turns in each participant’s thinking about the usefulness of child development theory while simultaneously mapping possible patterns across participants’ thinking about the usefulness of child development theory to increase learning and justice.

Following each interview, I wrote reflections on the interview process and what I thought I heard, learned and remembered. These reflections were useful tools to surface my impressions, assumptions and insights based on what I thought the participants said but when I reviewed the actual transcripts I found that my reflections were driven by what I thought the participants said but hadn’t. This was a valuable process because it enabled me to examine my own assumptions and ethnotheories. My ethnotheories were informed by,

1. My personal experiences as a child growing up;
2. My professional experiences as a classroom teacher, researcher and teacher educator; and
3. My professional preparation and continued graduate study.

These reflections were helpful because they helped me disentangle my hoped for answers from the responses I had, which enabled me to hear the participants’ voices more clearly. Similar to the approach in my pilot study (Cardwell, 2005), I analyzed the interview data on three levels,
• **Text**: what the participants actually said, organized by the interview questions;
• **Subtext**: what the participants seem to be in dialogue with – perhaps their ethnotheories and/or child development theory; and
• **Silences**: what the participants may have left out of their responses and what those gaps might mean (Taylor, Gilligan, Sullivan, 1995).

These three levels of analysis are theory driven and dialogic, like the participants’ narrative responses. As such I needed a layered narrative approach to analyze the data to preserve the complexity of the participants responses, deepening my layered approach to data analysis (Daiute, 2014; Miles & Huberman, 2004; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995; Noddings, 1992).

Once the interviews were transcribed, I listened to the interviews while reading the transcription to double check for accuracy and to immerse myself in the participants’ responses. With the accuracy of the transcription text accomplished, I read and listened to each interview again to listen to what each participant said and how they said it. Then, I read each interview transcript from beginning to end, and highlighted the themes the participants emphasized in their responses in relation to my research questions and sub-questions,

**Table 2.5 – Initial Analytic Approach**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Category</th>
<th>Coding Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer Probes</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptions of Children</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about Child Development Theory</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptions of Good Teaching</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This initial coding approach was guided by the interview protocol structure to systematically attend to the participants’ responses, recognizing that while my interview protocol was linear the participants’ responses may not be. For example,
in answering a question about good teaching the participants may in fact refer to their views about children and child development. In those instances, I highlighted the text based on the question posed and underlined the text using the color corresponding with the additional category.

For example, I would have highlighted the response to a question about good teaching with a pink highlighter and then underline those sections where they shared their views about children with a green highlighter and their beliefs about child development theory with a yellow highlighter. This allowed me to maintain and represent where and how individual participants’ responses became layered and more complex, as they constructed and reconstructed, or restored, their conceptions of children, beliefs about child development theory, and conceptions of good teaching (Daiute, 2014; Kenyon & Randall, 1997).

When I finished this, the volume of data felt overwhelming because there seemed to be a number of pieces that didn’t initially to connect. I then used the interview questions to organize the data across the participants to gain greater clarity. To accomplish this, I broke up the data into categories based on the sections of the interview protocol,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Data Analysis Categories – Across Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Vignette Interpretations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptions of Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about Child Development Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptions of Good Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisited Vignette Interpretation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I used the different types of questions in the interview protocol as my entry point to examine the participants’ responses or lack of responses. Then I created five separate documents that included the participants’ initial vignette interpretations, conceptions of children, beliefs about child development theory and conceptions of good teaching, and revisited vignette interpretations. These five documents were in transcript form and I struggled to see patterns in the participants’ responses.

To remedy this, I created a series of analytic charts, a strategy I effectively used in my earlier pilot study. These analytic charts preserved a panoramic view of the data without sacrificing individual participants’ voices. For example, the participants’ responses to the closed-ended questions in the interview revealed unexpected insights about the role of student teaching placements in shaping the participants’ views,
### Table 2.7 - Close-Ended Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Do teachers need to know</th>
<th>Is CDT useful?</th>
<th>Quality of school?</th>
<th>Do you feel safe?</th>
<th>Do children safe?</th>
<th>Are children’s needs met?</th>
<th>Do teachers shape your thinking?</th>
<th>Do colls think CDT is useful?</th>
<th>Colls &gt;5 yrs</th>
<th>Colls &lt;5 yrs</th>
<th>Admins think CDT useful?</th>
<th>Admin talk about CDT?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Got an A-not child friendly</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Hope not</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>High quality</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katalina</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y-Aca N-othr</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica*</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amaya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not really</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work not to let them</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Good school</td>
<td>Yes-phys</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Certain ones</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Good, solid</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excellent-Very high</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4/3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>High Quality</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Most part</td>
<td>Yes-overall</td>
<td>Not entirely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5=Extremely Useful; 4=Somewhat Useful; 3=Useful; 2=Not Very Useful; 1=Not At All Useful

I found that the student teaching placements were useful but not as influential as I though when I designed this study.

**Analytic Charts:** The strength of qualitative data is the wealth of detail that interviews elicit (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). At the same time, this strength posed a data analysis challenge when I tried to discern emergent patterns across participants because it was difficult to hold on to what the participants said and didn’t say as I moved from participant to participant. In my earlier pilot study, I addressed this challenge by creating analytic charts that included the text of the participants’ responses or lack of response to illustrate the range of their views without losing each participant’s individual voice. For example,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Initial Vignette Interpretations</th>
<th>Revisited Vignette Interpretations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imani</td>
<td>Jason has a little problem with social skills</td>
<td>Just give them something to do; talk to them; you'll find out it's not, with the outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>Might be a bully; needs help but doesn't know how to ask for it.</td>
<td>Talk to Jason; find out what's on Jason's mind; Is Jason frustrated because something is wrong at home or is Jason frustrated over something that's going on after school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliza</td>
<td>Hard to say. If it is deep seated anger then that goes beyond the classroom.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>It could be anything from hygiene to ADHD. Slow social skill development; likes being the center of attention; other kids might be jealous of him.</td>
<td>Look with a bird's eye view of the situation; considering herself as well as the child; it's gotta be a constant reflective process; step outside yourself really for a moment and look at what you're doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>He's having trouble with his peers; trouble understanding peer relationships; acting up in group situations.</td>
<td>I'm just curious as to why he has a tutor; if he's needing more positive social situations to really help him working one on one is really not facilitating that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is variation among the participants’ responses in their initial and revisited vignette interpretations but there weren’t enough participants to establish different types of initial and revisited vignette interpretations. The significant finding in my earlier pilot study is that there was a difference between the initial and revisited vignette interpretations moving toward increased use of child development theory (Cardwell, 2005). This analytic chart clearly and succinctly illustrated this finding.

In the current study, the number of participants made my approach in the pilot study unwieldy. In this study, I again asked the participants to interpret a vignette...
before answering any interview questions and the participants’ initial interpretations coalesced into three categories,

**Table 2.9 - Initial Vignette Interpretation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher/Child</th>
<th>Child Focused</th>
<th>Child/Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Ron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katalina</td>
<td>Liz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants responses were lost, n=12.

These initial interpretations were based on the information the participants had easy access to on their own and was perhaps indicative of the information available to them while teaching. This configuration of responses indicates that most of the participants decentered their view to focus exclusively on the child’s perspective without considering the role of the teacher, suggesting that they were beginning to use child development as a method to approach interpreting the vignette.

After answering questions about children, child development theory and good teaching there were four categories of interpretations,
Table 2.10 - Revised Vignette Interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher/Child</th>
<th>Child Focused</th>
<th>Child/Teacher</th>
<th>Child in Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Katalina</td>
<td>*Valerie</td>
<td>Michael Heather</td>
<td>Emily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Jessica</td>
<td>Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Ron</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Liz Anjali</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants responses were lost, n=12.
*These participants chose not to modify their initial interpretation.

The participants’ revisited interpretations were informed by their responses to the interview questions that elicited their views about children, child development theory and good teaching. This configuration of responses illustrates a shift from the initial interpretations with a focus on the individual child to focusing on the child’s perspective in relation to their teacher, which indicates that the interview questions may have provided a scaffold for the participants to use child development theory in considering the child’s perspective.

I used the following analytic chart to begin to explore the role of the student teaching placement to address the following research sub-question,

How might novice teachers’ field placements influence their beliefs about the usefulness of child development theory?

This analytic chart shows that the participants’ school based understandings didn’t seem to influence whether or not they changed their initial vignette interpretation toward greater use of child development theory,
Table 2.11 - Student Teaching Placements, Child Development Theories In-Use and Participants’ Interpretive Shifts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>No Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants responses were lost, n=12.

There is a slight indication that the participants’ views about child development theory in-use may exert some influence. Based on research about teaching, I hypothesized that for the participants who felt they were expert in child development to begin with didn’t change their initial interpretation because they believed they had a strong handle on it. For others, perhaps a more diffuse understanding of child development theory as a novice teacher made it less accessible to use in relation to individual children (Ziv & Frye, 2004).

Constructing these types of analytic charts enabled me to represent the participants responses while enabling me to generate additional interpretations and hypotheses guided by the research questions and literature. These analytic charts preserved and illustrated the range and depth of data I collected, anchoring my data analysis systematically and consistently in the participants’ responses.

**Generating Findings**: I generated the findings in this study by looking at the text, analytic charts organized in relation to my research questions and sub-questions. Based on what I learned in my earlier pilot study, I thought that novice teachers in urban public schools might believe that child development theory isn’t
useful to know or in their classrooms because the theories are based and normed on white European children's experiences and their students tended to be from low-income families from all over the world and/or people of color (Cardwell, 2005). To bolster this line of thinking, there is important critique offered in this area without sufficient theorizing about sustaining healthy development in diverse life circumstances (Hale, 1994; Delpit, 1988; Hale-Benson, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978).

Exploring this conversation between the data and the literature, I found that the participants' views about good teaching, anchored in ethnotheories and child development theory, were surprisingly similar given their diversity of teaching experience, background and education. Similarly, all the participants viewed child development theory as a valuable fund of knowledge for good teachers to have and use based on their teacher preparation course work and their teaching experiences. A more detailed discussion of the participants' views about children and child development follows in the next chapter.
Chapter 3

Beliefs about Children and Child Development Theory

“I think in terms of social-emotional development more than anything else really. I think that's the part that you can’t rush and you can’t slow it down.”

Interview with Melanie
Private School

Overview

Understanding the world from a child’s perspective is an important element of using child development theory, as a cultural meditational tool, novice teachers might use to adapt their classroom practice to meet children’s needs. This chapter focuses on the participants’ responses to questions about children and child development theory that were designed to elicit their categorical beliefs about children and their generalized knowledge of child development theory. Novice teachers’ categorical knowledge is an important fund of knowledge to explore because it tends to rest within the tacit realm of ethnotheories (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman, 2010).

At the time of the interviews, the participants in this study had completed their student teaching and were nearing the end of their teacher preparation program. As such, it was a ripe moment to ask them about their beliefs about children and child development because they were in the process of becoming teachers. I hoped that with the temporary support or scaffolding from the interview questions, the
participants would be able to construct and perhaps discover their beliefs about of children and understandings of child development theory in relation to teaching. My analysis was guided by the following research sub-questions,

1. What are novice teachers' beliefs about their students?
2. What are novice teachers' beliefs about child development?
3. What are novice teachers' beliefs about the usefulness of child development theories in understanding their students’ behavior in diverse school placements?

I entered this research thinking that the participants might describe their ideal child as the child who didn’t need to be taught (Lightfoot, 1978). However, the eight participants who characterized their students’ behaviors as types said ideal students were excited to learn and in response the participants were happy to work with these students until they succeeded academically, which is in line with the finding that teachers teach children they view as needing to learn (Ziv & Frye, 2004). Four participants viewed their students as individuals only and were willing to work with all their students in this manner.

All the participants valued child development theory as an important fund of professional knowledge for their teacher education courses and classroom practice. This convergence of beliefs despite varied backgrounds indicates that they relied on their professional funds of knowledge. An exception to this was the participants’ beliefs about the limits of child development theory in their classroom practice, which seemed grounded in their individual ethnotheories. I will discuss these findings in more detail in the sections listed below,

**Beliefs about Children** focuses on the participants’ two conceptions of children.  
**Definitions of Child Development Theory** focuses on the participants’ three working definitions of child development.
Child Development Theory In-Use focuses on the two ways participants used child development theory in their classroom practice. The Limits of Child Development focuses on the participants' five perceived limits of using child development theory to understand their students’ behavior.

**Beliefs about Children**

In keeping with some of the ways teachers can categorize children in schools, I wanted to elicit the participants’ general beliefs about children. When I asked the participants to describe three general types of children ideal, average and difficult to work with, they responded in the following ways,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Children</th>
<th>Children as Complex Individuals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Michael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amaya</td>
<td>Katalina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>Melanie</td>
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<td>Emily</td>
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<td>Liz</td>
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<td>Anjali</td>
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<td>Ron</td>
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</table>

**Types of Children**: Eight participants described the three types of children outlined in the question even though they also saw children as individuals.

Heather’s view was typical,

I feel so bad categorizing kids into three groups, but to be honest, I have a vision of what all those things look like, though.

Despite seeing children as types, this group was reluctant to become comfortable with the characterization because to do so may chip away children’s humanity.

There is a tension this group felt categorizing individual children into types. This
group saw their students as individuals whose behavior fell into identifiable categories, which may signal a ripe moment for them to notice trends and patterns among their students while holding on to their students’ individuality.

**Ideal children** weren’t the smartest, most prepared children in the class nor were they the children without academic struggle. According to this group, ‘ideal’ children were excited to learn, willing to work hard, emotionally stable and settled within themselves. Valerie’s view was typical, “An ideal child wants to try with you and wants to learn.” This group was willing to invest the extra time and effort to help their students succeed academically because they saw these children as receptive to their efforts to teach. Perhaps ideal children’s enthusiasm and emotional stability might have made it easy for this group to take the risks they needed to take in order to develop expertise in the classroom. The reward for their efforts was seeing their students’ academic performance improve (Ziv & Frye, 2004).

**Average children** were fine academically but didn’t seem to draw their teachers’ attention. Liz’s description of average children was typical, “…sort of run of the mill, does fine on tests, never is bothersome or annoying in anyway”. Average children did their work, didn’t cause trouble or draw attention to themselves, which seemed to pose a dilemma. At the same time, this group believed every child had something great about them but they hadn’t had a chance to discover the ‘thing’ that made average children amazing.

On the surface, this group didn’t see anything special in average children. However, from their teacher education coursework, this group knew something special was inside each child but didn’t seem to be able to find it. This suggests that
while the extremes in children’s behavior and achievement draws teachers’
attention, the children who come to school, cooperate and do their work without
fanfare may not get their teachers’ attention and full academic support to improve.
Perhaps children perceived as average don’t demonstrate a sufficient deficit to draw
their teachers’ attention (Ziv & Frye, 2004).

**Children difficult to work with** posed challenges this group didn’t feel
equipped to handle, which may refocus their attention to the limits of their expertise.
At the same time, this group located the responsibility for being difficult within the
child, leaving questions about their own developing expertise unasked. Despite their
intentions and aspirations to meet their students’ needs, there were limits to their
efforts. Ron’s view was typical,

> A kid can require a ton of work, but unless they seem malicious, I always find
> the energy to keep doing everything possible. So even when things can be
> very frustrating, I still find myself refreshed and coming back.

The participants are willing to work hard and face challenges to help struggling, but
not troubled, malicious children, succeed. This was possible as long as they could
see that their efforts made a positive difference because it inspired them to continue

This group’s attention was drawn to children’s affect more so than by
academic ability. Perhaps this indicates that the participants assumed their students
were academically capable and saw variation in the children’s response to the
experience of school and the classroom. This is important because the non-
cognitive, socially based, affective skills provide indirect support for academic
success across socioeconomic lines (Ingersoll, 2004; Lareau, 2003; Rothstein,
2003; Aronowitz, 2004; Dewey, 1938/1997). Ethnotheories rest on unconscious, tacit knowledge engaging in civilized oppression that can silence, isolate and socially exclude children from their classmates and academic work (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman, 2010; Deutsch, 2006; Rothstein, 2003 Harvey, 1999; Polanyi, 1968/2010). This means that the novice teachers may be successful in the classroom without knowing why.

Describing types of children revealed novice teachers’ need for support to reconcile what they know to be true about children and the practical realities of life in the classroom. In these moments of uncertainty, guided reflections can be an important integrative tool to help novice teachers develop adaptive expertise to discern and meet the full range of capacities children have and display in the classroom. Based on this group’s responses, novice teachers maybe likely to attend to the extreme positives and negatives in their classrooms, allowing those children who quietly cooperate and do their work go unnoticed. In this transitional space of becoming teachers, teacher educators and school-based faculty can offer valuable opportunities for novice teachers to notice and value their students’ behavior patterns to attend to each child as an individual member of the class. A guided reflection with more experienced educators can bring novice teachers’ ethnotheories, which guide practice and tend to remain tacit, into the explicit realm of knowledge by interrogating the ‘teacher in the head’ to develop adaptive expertise while helping them move away from sorting children into types in favor of encouraging them to engage with children as unique individuals (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005;
Children as Complex Individuals: Four participants said they didn’t see children as types. Katalina’s response was typical,

I don't know. It’s a hard question for me to answer ‘cause I don’t really think about kids in that way. I don’t really think that there is like an ideal child or like an average child. I mean there are children that exhibit behaviors that make it difficult sometimes but I don't know, I don’t really I guess think about, think about the kids I work with like that. I guess the strengths and weaknesses and areas for growth that they kind of each bring to the table. And I think that all of the kids that I work with have those, have both of those components. I don’t know, I don’t really think about my students in that way.

This group viewed children as complex individuals, expecting each child to have a unique combination of both strengths and weaknesses. The variability among children is part of what makes teaching so challenging and appealing to them.

This conception of children is a developmentally grounded view, describing children as individuals who are uniquely complex. Despite working in charter, public and private schools, this group viewed children similarly, as individuals who enter the classroom with strengths and struggles that are worthy of their attention and efforts. This group was able to engage with the full range of children’s behaviors that can help children feel attended to, valued and included. This convergence of beliefs despite their personal and academic diversity suggests that these views were grounded in their shared professional knowledge.

Overall, the eight participants who saw children as types focused largely on the non-cognitive, social realm of children’s receptiveness and readiness to learn the lessons they planned to teach (Ingersoll, 2004). The group who saw children as types seemed to be searching for an efficient way to manage the complexity of the interpersonal classroom dynamic by using types to manage this complexity. The
participants who categorized children into types demonstrate beginning to move along the trajectory of adult development (Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Kegan, 1982).

Four participants saw children as individuals they needed to get to know, understand and engage in learning in order to be effective teachers. Although most of the participants saw their students as types, all the participants valued children's individuality. This group was able to engage this complexity by approaching their students with openness and curiosity rather than trying to manage them. They were able to make a personal connections to each child and allow child development theory to inform their responses to it. In this way, this group engaged with the full range of children’s behaviors that can help children feel attended to, valued and included. As they become more practiced with the support of their teacher education faculty mentors, they will move away from categorizing children into types like the first group to seeing children as complex individuals like the second group.

Both groups’ conceptions of children convey the importance of engaging relationally with individual children to further academic learning, which is a shared, developmentally grounded view. The challenge and attraction of teaching for the participants is finding ways to navigate the individual complexity of their students using the professional knowledge of generalized child development theory and finding ways to adjust their classroom practice to meet each child’s needs.

Definitions of Child Development Theory

Human development is the science that seeks to understand the ways in which people change and remain the same as they grow older (Berger, 2004:9).
This definition rests on Piaget’s notion of conservation, acknowledging that development is both continuous and discontinuous (Elkind, 1981; Piaget, 1968). In asking participants to define child development, I wanted to avoid a recitation of the textbook definition above in favor of eliciting the participants’ working definition to gain greater insight on the child development theory they might apply in the classroom.

I anticipated that the participants would feel challenged by this question but I hoped they would construct their working definitions of child development during the interview. I also thought that this would be a practically useful exercise for the participants beyond the interview, enabling the participants to become more clear about child development theory. I found that the participants defined child development theory in three ways,
*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants’ responses to this question were lost, n=12.

**Growth**: Four participants defined child development theory as a process of growth over time acknowledging the dynamic, cumulative nature of human development. Emily’s definition is typical,

I'd think of it as how children grow and develop within a social, physical, cultural context...and how they grow and develop and negotiate within this context...also within their biological trajectory. I feel like it's sort of this dynamic interaction among all of these different forces of individual self, culture, society, environment, you know, all of these things interact together.

While this definition is connected to the textbook definition, this group went further to situate children’s growth and development with a dynamic sociocultural context.

This group is in the process of creating a new category of professional knowledge evidenced by a dynamic interaction between growth and the context within which it takes place.

Their definition of child development as growth moves child development from a distanced, external source of distilled theoretical information, into an available fund of knowledge to inform their practice. This indicates that they perceive more than they can name indicative of a resolution of a cognitive disequilibrium through accommodation (Piaget, 1968). Their inability to fully narrate their thinking suggested that this would be a ripe moment for guided reflections with their teacher.
education mentors to help them make personal connections with child development theory so that it can become personal, accessible and useful in the classroom.

**Continuum:** Three participants described child development as a series of changes taking place over time within a range of possibilities. While this group’s definitions are similar to the previous group, these three participants went further to specify the type of growth they saw as definitive of and particular to child development. They placed individual children at the center, using child development theory as a tool to help them attach meaning to their students’ behaviors. Michael’s response was typical,

There are a lot of generalizations in child development, but for me it feels very individual. So, taking the child from where they are and looking at that child and seeing how they’re acting and what they’re doing in school or in life, and then sort of matching them up with what researchers have said along this continuum -and I guess that would be part of it, that there is this development continuum that’s been developed by researchers and experiments -and seeing where that child is on that continuum and helping them to move along to reach the end of the continuum, whatever that may be. But, for me, that would be to reach their highest potential.

This group was able to name the dilemma of using child development theory with individual children the first group could perceive but didn’t name. Navigating the space between the generalized theories of child development and individual children can be challenging. The approach this group chose was to begin with the child situated within the sociocultural context of their lives and then looking at the theory to see how child development can shed light on their observations.

This group acknowledged the inexact nature of applying a generalized theory to individual children. This imprecise fit between generalized theory and individual children in the classroom may call teachers’ ethnotheories forward to invite
innovation and adaptation that can be supported by their school-based colleagues and teacher education mentors (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Shepard, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond & Rust, 2005).

By defining child development in this way, this group holds open a range of possibilities to narrate what may be going on with their individual students’ growth, using their ethnotheories to individualize child development theory and adjust their practice to increase their students’ learning. In so doing, they move ever closer toward developing adaptive expertise, which is a characteristic of good teaching (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Nieto, 2003; Noddings, 1992).

“Understanding Children from the Inside Out”: Three participants defined working definition of child development as a way to understand children from the inside out and working with children in ways that support and sustain each child’s unique developmental trajectory. For this group, child development functioned as both a theory to learn and a method they could use to understand children’s behavior from the child’s perspective. Valerie’s view is typical,

I think having a working knowledge of it [child development] gives you the ability to stop and look at this little person in front of you and think about what is the world like for you? What might be going on in that little brain, because sometimes it's hard to just know? There's a kid and there's just something that's kind of off it's still really hard to try and get in there sometimes. It just helps give you that point of access of what is the world like for you and how you are experiencing this moment.

Asking themselves questions about what might motivate children’s behavior as a point of entry to children’s thinking describes a way to develop a theory of mind, using their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory. Understanding children’s behavior in this way requires teachers to embrace uncertainty and risk
being wrong. For example, when a child behaves in an unexpected way, child development theory provides a methodological and theoretical frame enabling novice teachers to decode the language of a child’s behavior from the child’s perspective. Imbedded in this group’s definition is their belief about the situated nature of child development theory shaped by the unique sociocultural context within which it occurs.

Overall, each of the three groups attended to the needs of individual children in their definitions of child development theory, which suggested they shared a professional fund of knowledge. At the same time, their definitions of child development theory constituted a developmental trajectory beginning with a generalized notion of child development as a situated process of growth, followed by wrestling with the dilemma of applying a generalized theory of growth to individual children and finally understanding using child development theory as both theory and method to understand children’s behavior from the inside out. This trajectory charts a possible process novice teachers can use to apply child development theory in the classroom with individual children as both theory and method.

I wanted to explore a possible link between the participants’ definitions of child development theory and their beliefs about children. I found that there was a gap between the participants’ theoretical understandings about children based on their child development knowledge and their beliefs about children rooted in their ethnotheories (Cuban, 1993; Lortie, 1975).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.3 - Conceptions of Children and Definitions of Child Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Understanding”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The four participants who defined child development theory as growth, with one exception, saw children as types. Their articulated definition of child development theory was vague and became more clear as they applied it with children, which indicated that they knew more about child development theory than they were able to name. The three participants described child development theory as a continuum viewed children as individuals and engaged in navigating the dilemma of applying generalized child development theory in the classroom with individual children. Similar to the first group, these three participants who defined child development as a continuum weren’t able to fully describe what they meant in their definition beyond saying that the stages represented a continuum of possibilities for children. The last group of three participants defined child development theory as “understanding children from the inside out” and viewed children as types. This group’s definition differed from the other two groups because they described child development theory as a ‘point of access’ to see the world through children’s eyes, taking a methodological approach to using it in the classroom to generate a theory of mind, using their ethnotheories to connect individual children’s behavior with child development theory. In this way, child development theory became more user friendly in the classroom.
Child Development Theory In-Use

After asking about the participants’ beliefs about children and definitions of child development theory, I wondered if the participants actually used child development theory in the classroom to attach meaning to their students' behavior and in their classroom practice. I also wanted to see what, if any, influence the participants’ student teaching placements had on their use of child development theory in the classroom,

*Table 3.4 - Child Development Theory In-Use and Student Teaching Placements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Theories</th>
<th>Frame of Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katalina</td>
<td>Charter</td>
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<td>Ron</td>
<td>Private</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Private</td>
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<td>Melanie</td>
<td>Private</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Public</td>
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*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants’ responses were lost, n=12.

Given this configuration of responses, I found that the participants’ student teaching placements didn’t seem to influence their use of child development theory in the classroom, which was a surprising finding. I also found that there wasn’t a link between the participants’ definitions of child development and the way they used it in the classroom.

**Child Development Theory as Specific Theories:** Three participants said they remembered specific theorists and theories,

*Table 3.5 – Child Development Theory as Specific Theories*
The attraction of the ZPD is understandable because this theory offers guidance on what teachers can do to facilitate children’s learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978). While one participant drew on both Vygotsky and Piaget’s theories of development, this group focused on the ZPD as their main take-away from learning child development (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1968). Michael’s view is typical,

There’s many different themes from my child development class, but the biggest connection that I’ve been drawing in my own practice and with some of my other courses are some of Vygotsky’s ideas. And that’s been really salient for me with the Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding children, to help them where they are to move to the next level and really just that idea of me, as the teacher, being kind of like a guide for the child. Instead of talking down to them I am next to them, helping to support them in where they are and where they need to be.

For this group, the ZPD provided a bridge between theory and practice with a theory of development that could be enacted to facilitate learning (Vygotsky, 1978). As such it provided enough theoretical guidance to move this group away from concerns about getting teaching techniques right toward support to create their own approaches in the classroom to meet each child’s needs, characteristic of adaptive expertise (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Skovholt, 2004).

This theory also provides guidance on the role of the teacher as facilitator of children’s learning rather than the director of it. In this shift away from teaching as

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2 The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. …The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state (Vygotsky, 1978:86).
telling to facilitating children’s learning may support their evolving conception of the

teacher’s role as being located beside and behind children rather than in front of
them. This positioning acknowledges that children have valuable knowledge and
insights to contribute to the learning process, suggesting that this group sees value
in engaging children in conversation as an approach to teaching. Engaging each
child in meaningful conversations about learning is a necessary part of using the
ZPD, which can support and sustain a more just learning environment where
children’s insights aren’t silenced but are included as a substantive contribution to
learning in the classroom fact encouraged to share their insights (Vygotsky, 1978).
This kind of learning environment where children can name and claim what they
know from experience with classmates in relation to the lesson being taught can
interrupt the subtle, relationally based civilized oppression (Harvey, 1999).

The participants’ willingness to engage in these kinds of conversations with
children indicates a move toward using an authoritative pedagogy, often used in elite
private schools (Schwebel, 2004; Baumrind, 1991). Michael continues,

I’m taking a language acquisition class right now and we were exploring this
idea of dialect and how identity is so integral to the student and the student
feeling successful and growing into the person they will be. If you deny that
dialect, or if you deny where they are developmentally, that can be extremely
damaging. Forget about arithmetic and reading and writing. If you’re not
dealing with the base, with who that person is, then everything else just falls
apart.

Here, the conversation between teacher preparation coursework and classroom
practice shows clarity about valuing the totality of a child’s identity that maybe
expressed through language. Recognizing the developmental implications of
language acquisition as a conduit of identity, culture and connection supports a
classroom practice organized around providing children with multiple ways to express who they are and what they know in the ways that are best for them. This is the relational space in which justice can be enacted, creating multiple opportunities for children to be seen, heard and received by their teachers and peers (Harvey, 1999; Noddings, 1992). Not attending to children’s individual needs within the complex sociocultural context of the classroom by silencing children’s humanity, insights, knowledge and identities means that these children’s path to academic success is in spite of their teachers’ efforts not because of them (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman, 2010; Steele, 2010).

In order for a teacher to sit beside and get behind their students to support learning and justice, the teacher has to take in the language, culture and identity of each child into account, connecting with each of them and then connecting them to each other to enlist their cooperation to learn. At its best, teaching requires thought, reflection, facilitation and purposeful action to adapt their classroom practice to meet children’s identity, human and learning needs (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Nieto, 2003; Gordon, 1999; Noddings, 1992).

**Child Development Theory as a Frame of Reference:** Seven participants talked about child development theory as a frame of reference, describing it as a diverse body of information that helped them recast children’s words and actions in the broader sociocultural context of their lives. This group saw child development as a body of knowledge they could apply in the classroom with children in an infinite number of ways. Heather’s response was typical,

…it gave me a more nuanced perspective of my students. So, I could see when there were problems or presenting certain issues over and over, I could
start to think more about what the root of those problems was and how much of that was classroom based and how much was home based and how I as the teacher could help the students. Given what they were showing me, what did it really mean because it didn’t always mean what it looked like.

This group used child development theory to identify patterns of behavior and explore possible motivations for the observed behavior. Then, using insights on the observed behavior grounded in their ethnotheories this group went on to construct likely hypotheses using child development theory that ultimately inform the teaching approaches they develop to support the child. This is an example of how novice teachers use their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to understand likely motivations for their students’ behaviors and develop teaching approaches to meet each individual child’s needs.

The realization that children’s outer behavior isn’t necessarily a direct reflection of their inner feelings is grounded in child development theory. Stepping back and reflecting on the meaning beneath their students’ behavior rather than focusing on the appearance of the behavior constitutes an important shift toward using child development theory as a method to understand and as a theoretical frame of reference to attach likely meaning to children’s behavior. It also signals a shift away from attending to children in a moment isolated from other moments toward thinking about how a particular moment fits into each child’s sociocultural context. She continues,

For example, if a student wanted to hug me 20 times a day, there was something going on underneath that desire even thought it looks like a positive action. Or, if a student who was hitting everybody every single day for the last 6 weeks of school, there was something going on for her and being able to recognize that and deal with students to get to the heart of what the matter actually was and not just deal with the behavior I was seeing everyday.
These two examples illustrate the importance of this approach for developing adaptive expertise. While it may feel good in the moment to receive a child’s sustained affection, it was a ripe moment to question the excessive nature of the affection because it fell outside the realm of typical behavior based on child development theory. Raising the question of why so much hugging or what might this child be trying to hang on to is an opening for them to use their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to generate likely hypotheses about what might going on. While hugging is an expression of care and connection, re-examining a child’s behavior through the lens of child development theory helps this group explore what the child might be responding to, worried about or wanting to hold on to.

From a developmental perspective, children enact the feeling they don’t understand or have the words to name. The second example illustrates this well. Considering the meaning of a child’s behavior within the temporal context of the school year is significant because forming attachments is challenging and separation can be even more challenging. In this case, a child hitting their classmates at the end of the year probably doesn’t mean s/he doesn’t know the class rule against hitting others. Rather it may signal this child’s sensitivity or anxiety about leaving his class and moving on to the next grade, or not moving on.

This group didn’t name specific theory or theorists because they used child development theory as a general frame of reference to help raise questions about the meaning of a child’s behavior to them and to generate teaching approaches that satisfy the child’s unmet needs that gave rise to the behavior.
While it may feel good in the moment to have a child’s seemingly limitless affection, teachers need to step back and wonder why so much and what else might be going on for the child. Although having positive responses from children helps teachers remain engaged, re-examining a child’s behavior through the lens of child development theory moves this group to wonder more purposefully about what the child’s perspective might be.

Overall, the participants’ descriptions of how they used child development theory in the classroom fell into two groups. Three participants use specific child development theories and seven participants used it as a frame of reference. Given the diversity among the participants, this cohesion of their theories in-use suggests that they drew on shared understanding of child development theory. At the same time, it seems that the participants also used their ethnotheories as well, which might explain why there wasn’t a link among the participants’ beliefs about children, definitions of child development theory or child development theories in-use. Even though the participants valued child development theory, they believed that it didn’t explain everything they would encounter in the classroom.

**The Limits of Child Development Theory**

Despite the participants’ shared view that child development theory is a valuable fund of professional knowledge for their course work and classroom practice, they also thought child development theory was insufficient on its own to decode the full complexity of their students’ behavior. The wide range of views indicate that the participants found child development theory an insufficient fund of knowledge to decode the language of their students’ behavior,
So Much to Know: Three participants found the sheer volume of information associated with learning children development theory daunting. To understand the participants' responses, I situated them within the context of their views about children, definitions of child development theory and their child development theory in-use in the classroom,

Table 3.6 - The Limits of Child Development Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>So Much to Know</th>
<th>Hard to Discern</th>
<th>Too Constrained</th>
<th>A Way Inside</th>
<th>No Limits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants' responses were lost, n=12.

Table 3.7 – So Much to Know

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>So Much to Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Theory In-Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Inside/Out</td>
<td>Specific Theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Inside/Out</td>
<td>Frame of Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Inside/Out</td>
<td>Frame of Reference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This group seemed to see children and define child development theory in the same ways. They differed slightly in how they used child development theory in the classroom. The convergence in their beliefs about children and definitions of child development indicates they used their shared funds of professional knowledge. They diverged in their application of child development in the classroom, which suggests they may be individualizing their shared understanding of child development theory by integrating it with their ethnotheories. As such, the participants' ethnotheories functioned as a resource, enabling them to navigate
between a generalized child development theory and their classroom practice with individual children. Anjali’s view was typical,

I wish there was more time to go in depth into the theories learned because I felt like there’s still so much more to learn.

For this group, learning child development theory opened a vast and valuable fund of professional knowledge that they couldn’t fully master in a single semester course. For this group, the limits of child development theory seemed to be their sense that they had only just scratched the surface of what they could learn about children’s development.

**Hard to Discern:** Two participants found child development theory hard to discern elements of children’s behavior that is clearly developmental,

**Table 3.8 – Hard to Discern**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Theory In-Us</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Frame of Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Continuum</td>
<td>Frame of Reference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two participants in this group held different beliefs about children and child development theory but they did use child development theory in their classrooms the same way. This suggests that perhaps they used their ethnotheories in similar ways but hadn’t had sufficient support to master child development theory enough to be able to see how the generalized theory remains constant while manifesting differently from context to context and from child to child.

When teachers aren’t familiar with their students’ daily lives, using child development theory, information about children’s sociocultural contexts and their
ethnotheories can be challenging. Jessica’s view is typical,

I think the environmental versus developmental – hard to tell sometimes. So, there’s a point in which I thought a student was acting a certain way, because of his or her developmental stage. I thought she was just a little bit behind. But we had a conference with her mom, and there was something very different going on. So, not using development too much as a crutch. …maybe thinking about development as on of or in conversation with the environment a little bit more would be helpful.

There are times when child development theory can lead to incorrect interpretations, especially when teachers use it distilled of context and culture. Without a clear understanding of children’s lives outside school, teachers need to enlist the support of families to gain an understanding of children’s sociocultural context. In this example, partnering with a parent provided greater insight on the child’s sociocultural context outside school that her teacher was unaware of. As a result, the teacher amended her initial interpretation of a possible developmental delay to recognize that stress outside school was interfering with academic success inside school.

Without a clear understanding of the interaction of development and the sociocultural context, it is difficult to discern the boundaries and possibilities of child development theory. This illustrates the importance of novice teachers being mentored so that they can gain the clarity they may lack. Despite a lack of clarity around the theory, the impetus to engage in a problem-solving conversation smoothed a path for the teacher to develop teaching approaches to meet the needs that motivated the concerning behavior. This was a developmentally grounded approach that even though child development theory was found wanting that enabled the teacher to understand what might be going on from the child’s
perspective.

**Too Constrained**: The three participants in this group believed their approach to teaching was constrained by using child development theory,
Table 3.9 – Too Constrained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Theory In-Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>Continuum</td>
<td>Specific Theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Frame of Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Frame of Reference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although there were points of convergence, this group didn’t seem to have cohesive beliefs about children, definitions of child development and child development theory in-use. This group believed using child development theory constrained their ability to understand their students’ behaviors. Liz’s view was emblematic,

I think you could get limited in the sense that it’s always interesting to read about how certain kids could fit into certain places along the developmental sort of scale or whatever would be considered. But I think that you get into trouble with trying to fit kids into different sort of places being like, “Oh, I’m going to think about where they are developmentally and then use that as like my reasoning for why they’re acting like this.” And it could be used as an excuse in some ways. ...alternatively, it can be used to sort of create a diagnosis, which I don’t necessarily think is the right thing to do.

This group viewed child development theory as a sorting mechanism to explain away or excuse children’s misbehavior. This suggests that perhaps they see child development theory as separate from their ethnotheories and are struggling to attach meaning to their students’ behaviors with child development theory alone.

Despite seeing child development theory as a sorting mechanism, this group resisted using it to categorize or diagnose children. While child development theory is useful, it is an imprecise and generalized theory when applied in the classroom distilled of context, leaves openings for misuse as a means to sort, diagnose and excuse children’s behaviors. Without support from school-based colleagues or teacher education mentors, this could become an incentive not to use child
development theory in the classroom. The pressure to appear expert without expertise can exacerbate this circumstance because in their effort to minimize their risk of making mistakes by using child development theory novice teachers may overly rely on their ethnotheories, which could take them away from developing adaptive expertise, a characteristic of good teaching (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Skovholt, 2004; Nieto, 2003).

**A Way Inside**: Similar to the previous group, Emily struggled to use the generalized child development theories to understand her students’ behavior from their perspective. However, she didn’t think child development theory constrained her practice. Her difficulty arose because she was concerned about supplanting her students’ perspectives with her ethnotheories,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Way Inside</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name</strong></td>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emily saw children as types and defined child development theory as a process of unspecified growth. Her beliefs weren’t absolute because she used the ZPD in her classroom as a way to engage her students in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). At the same time, it was a struggle for Emily to get inside her students’ thinking because she was concerned about the consequences of an incorrect hypothesis,

I don’t know. Sometimes I try to put myself in the mind of the child, and that’s almost an impossible thing to do, to find some way to really understand development from the inside.

Here, Emily notes the impossibility of knowing what is in a child’s mind with any
certainty, leaving her reluctant to mistakenly overwrite her students’ realities with her own ethnotheories. In this, Emily’s view is reminiscent of the third group thinking that child development theory was a constraint on practice. For Emily, the constraint of child development theory is that it doesn’t really define what is going on inside a child with any certainty.

The willingness to make a mistake is an important element in learning at any age. Perhaps this is a manifestation of Emily’s desire ‘to get it right’ (Skovholt, 2004). However, as was the case with the second group, getting a hypothesis wrong, can open a collaborative, problem-solving conversation with children and families where no one person has ‘the’ answer but each has important parts to contribute to understanding the world through children’s eyes.

**No Limits**: As a psychology major in college, Katalina had the most child development course work and practice in college. As such, she had the chance to experience the expansiveness of child development theory in the classroom in college and graduate school,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Limits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Theory In-Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katalina</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>Continuum</td>
<td>Frame of Reference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Her conception of children as individuals along with her definition and use of child development theory as a range of possibilities seemed to reflect the depth of her undergraduate experiences with child development theory. Her view of child development theory as a range of theoretical and practical possibilities to
understand children’s behaviors may have left room for her to consider environmental and cultural issues that shape children’s lives from within the context of child development theory.

As such, Katalina experienced child development theory as having no limits in her classroom,

Sometimes I feel like there’s some people I worked with kind of like make a lot of excuses for kids. I think that kids really appreciate it when you understand where they are and are able to both make sure that they’re meeting the expectation of where they are and then supporting them and pushing them forward.

In this, Katalina describes the tensions many teachers feel when they know the significant personal struggles some children face outside school and having high academic expectations inside school. Perhaps using ethnotheories alone can lead some teachers to ‘make excuses’ for children’s lack of academic achievement due to personal trauma or emotional upset. While the first move would be to offer comfort in the face of a suffering child, Katalina advocates for teachers to give children more than comfort by being mindful of children’s academic and life success. To this end, Katalina wants to provide her students with the full range of academic and social tools they will need to change their own life outcomes, which is the most valuable comfort she can provide.

Child development theory helps Katalina see where her students are in the learning process and what they need from her to succeed, positioning her students as partners to promote their own learning and academic success. Katalina understands the broader context of her students’ lives using child development theory to help her find the balance for each child between when to give a child a
break and when to encourage them to push forward.

Overall, most of the participants believed that to fully understand their students' behavior, they needed more information and insights on their students' sociocultural context to illuminate the full range of possible motivations for their students' behaviors in the classroom. It takes time, practice, guided reflection through discussion to see beyond the theoretical content of child development theory to the methodology that opens the possibility of using ethnotheories and the sociocultural context to individualize child development theory.

The participants in this study are in the process of developing their understanding of child development while using it in the classroom with individual children. Asking the participants about their views on the limitations of using child development theory in the classroom surfaced a range of important insights. The challenges of applying a generalized theory to attach meaning to the behaviors of individual children revealed a ripe moment for mentorship by school-based and teacher education faculty to help novice teachers make connections between their ethnotheories and child development theory to gain greater insight on their students' behavior to help them develop adaptive expertise (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Ultimately, it isn't about the benefits or limitations of child development theory in the classroom. It is about teacher educators finding ways to help novice teachers to include children's perspectives in their classroom practice by using child development theory as a mediator of their interpretations of children’s behavior.

**Chapter Summary**
In this chapter, I examined the participants’ beliefs about children, definitions of child development and their use of child development theory in the classroom.

**Table 3.12 - Participants’ Categorical Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart Names</th>
<th>Number of Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Types of Children (8)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children as Complex Individuals (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Child Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Growth (4)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Continuum (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Understanding Children from the Inside Out” (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Development Theory In-Use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Specific Theories (3)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Frame of Reference (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limits of Child Development Theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• So Much to Know (3)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hard to Discern (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Too Constrained (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A Way Inside (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No Limits (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants demonstrate a great deal of cohesion in their beliefs about children and child development theory, which, in light of their diversity, suggests that they drew on their shared professional knowledge. The exception to this pattern was the participants’ beliefs about the limits of child development theory. The participants’ beliefs about the limits of child development theory were widely varied, suggesting that they drew on their individual ethnotheories. In the following summary, I will consider the participants’ responses in relation to the research sub-questions,

1. What are novice teachers’ beliefs about their students?
2. What are novice teachers’ beliefs about child development?
3. What are novice teachers’ beliefs about the usefulness of child development theories in understanding their students’ behavior in diverse school placements?

**What are novice teachers’ beliefs about their students?**
The participants held two main beliefs about their students. Eight participants saw their students as types and four participants saw them as complex individuals,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Children</th>
<th>Children as Complex Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first group saw their students as individuals while sorting their behavior patterns into categories, which is an approach geared toward developing routine expertise (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). In each of the three types, this group assumed children’s academic capacity and focused on their students’ affective, non-cognitive aspects of learning (Ingersoll, 2004). Ideal children came across as ready and willing to learn. Average children didn’t seem to catch the participants’ attention. The children difficult for the participants to work with seemed to have struggles they didn’t understand or know how to handle. The second group viewed their students as complex individuals embodying strengths and struggles all the time, an approach geared toward developing adaptive expertise (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

The participants in both groups focused their attention on smoothing the path for their students to succeed academically despite any social or emotional challenges when they could. For the second group especially, attending to each child’s individual identity and personhood was the way to make academic lessons meaningful and relevant. Both groups’ beliefs demonstrate the importance they place on engaging relationally with individual children to further academic achievement, which is a view grounded in child development theory.
The participants believe that children are individuals worthy of engagement, attention, relationship and support. They also believe children are active participants in the learning process, suggesting that the participants may be developing an authoritative pedagogical approach to teaching across varied school placements (Baumrind, 1991).

**What are novice teachers’ beliefs about child development?**

Despite the participants’ varied life experiences, all of the participants said they believe child development theory is a valuable fund of professional knowledge for teachers to know and use. With this research sub-question, I wanted to examine the participants’ working definitions of child development to explore potential links the participants might make between their beliefs and classroom practice. The cohesion among the participants’ definitions of child development indicate that they drew on shared funds of professional knowledge that led them to define child development in three ways,

![Table 3.14 - Definitions of Child Development](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth Continuum</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Children from the Inside Out</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants’ responses were lost, n=12.

The first group defined child development as a process of growth over time that is complex, cumulative and interactive across all the domains of development. The second group also viewed child development as a process of growth over time but they described how the process of growth. This group also struggled with the
tension of applying a generalized theory to individual children. The last group’s definition was different from the first two groups. The third group defined child development as understanding situations in the classroom from the children’s perspective, positioning children as unique individuals. The participants believe child development theory is a valuable fund of professional knowledge but had a hard time figuring out how to apply the generalized child development theory in the classroom with their students.

What are novice teachers’ beliefs about the usefulness of child development theories in understanding their students’ behavior in diverse school placements?

In framing this research sub-question, I wanted to explore the role of the participants’ student teaching placement experiences and their perception of the usefulness of child development theory. The participants’ responses to my question about the limitations of child development theory offered insight on the ways the participants integrated child development theory with their ethnotheories in the classroom. Typically, student teaching constitutes the clinical or applied element of teacher preparation programs where novice teachers have a chance to integrate their developing funds of professional knowledge, like child development theory, with their ethnotheories that inform their classroom practice (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman, 2010; Cuban, 1993).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limits</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>School Placements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So Much</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>All Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to Discern</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>All Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Constrained</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 Charter/2 Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Way Inside</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.15 - The Limits of Child Development Theory and School Placements
The first two groups’ experiences of the limits of child development theory in their classrooms and their student teaching school placements were linked. The first group working in private school placements believed that there was so much to know that they had a hard time applying it in the classroom with confidence. The second group, working in public school placements found it difficult to discern when child development was influencing their students’ behavior and when environmental factors were at work, seeing child development theory and the context within which it takes place as separate. The third group was mixed with two participants working in private schools and one working in a charter school. This group felt constrained by child development theory believing that they couldn’t use all they knew to decode the language of children’s behavior. For them, child development theory was a way to sort, measure and perhaps excuse their students’ behavior, which wasn’t something they wanted to do. While there are convergences between the participants’ views about the limits of child development theory and their school placements no clear pattern emerged.

All the participants said that child development theory was a valuable fund of professional knowledge for all teachers regardless of the locations of their school placements. However, their views about the limits of child development theory in the classroom reveal some of the struggle they have applying a generalized theory to individual children independently. While the participants valued child development theory, they also realized that they needed to know more about their students than child development theory to fully understand their students’ behavior in the
classroom. When I asked them about the limits of child development theory, the participants believed that child development theory was separate from the sociocultural context within which development takes place.

Good teachers must hold each individual child’s needs, the curriculum and the sociocultural context in their minds at the same time (Nieto, 2003; Cardwell, 2002; Palmer, 1999; Noddings, 1992). A more detailed view of the participants’ perceptions of the sociocultural context surrounding their students’ lives as well as their own emerged when I asked the participants about good teaching. These evolving conceptions of children, child development theory and pedagogical implications suggest the importance of asking about the participants’ beliefs about good teaching, the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter 4

Beliefs about Good Teaching

I’m thinking about do I stop and adjust while things are happening. It helps me realize why I should push this further or just stop with this kid but this kid’s soaring. Let’s keep going.

Interview with Ron, Private School

Invest in the future, change someone’s life – teach.
Dr. Jill Biden

Overview

In the previous chapter, I examined the participants’ beliefs about children and child development theory and found that they were anchored in the participants’ ethnotheories and professional knowledge. The participants’ views about the limits of child development theory in their classrooms seemed to provide a space for them to construct what they thought based on what they had learned and experienced. This chapter focuses on the participants’ beliefs about good teaching, surfacing possible links among their ethnotheories, education experiences, graduate school courses and student teaching placements. My analysis was guided by the following research sub-question,

What are novice teachers’ beliefs about good teaching?

I found the participants’ decision to teach was a thoughtful one that balanced their career hopes and concerns that served as a context from which their definitions of good teaching emerged. I further found that the participants’ conceptions of good teaching served as an internal barometer, determining whose advice they would
follow about teaching practice. Examining the participants’ beliefs about good
teaching is important because they are informed by their professional knowledge
and the participants’ ethnotheories based on their own school experiences. In this
study, the participants’ beliefs about good teaching seemed to mediate their
decisions about whose advice on teaching they would follow as they journeyed
toward becoming good teachers,

*The Decision to Teach* examines the participants’ academic preparation and their choice to become teachers in relation to their hopes and concerns. *Highly Qualified Teachers vs. Good Teaching* examines the participants’ view of the policy regarding highly qualified teachers in every classroom and the practice of good teaching. *Definitions of Good Teaching* explores the participants’ definition of good teaching and what funds of knowledge they use to generate these definitions. *Whose Advice do the Participants Decide to Take?* examines how the participants make decisions about whose advice to follow on teaching from their school-based colleagues.

**The Decision to Teach**

The participants entered teaching with a wide range of academic backgrounds and previous work experience,
An examination of the participants’ college majors and career aspirations, I noticed that their college majors are concentrated in the social sciences and humanities. Although teaching isn’t directly related, there may have been an underlying interest in helping others without complete clarity on the particular contribution they wanted to make. The participants’ intellectual diversity and varied life experiences suggest that it would be unlikely that their varied experiences and academic preparation would result in shared beliefs about children, child development theory and good teaching without a shared knowledge base.

A criticism of the current education reforms is that they provide greater access for a wide range of people to work inside classrooms with inadequate professional preparation that can threaten children’s academic achievement (Ravitch, 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1997). This ease of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>College Major</th>
<th>Work Experience or Career Aspiration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Psychology-Neuroscience</td>
<td>Medical Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Education Policy Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>Theater Arts</td>
<td>Actress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Interior Design &amp; Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>Computer Science &amp; Economics</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katalina</td>
<td>Developmental Psychology</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Political Science &amp; Theater</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>Criminal Justice &amp; Education</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Environmental Science &amp; Political Science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Studio Art</td>
<td>Artist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties 1 participant’s response to this question were lost, n=12.
increased access to the classroom also allowed people like the participants in this study to work with children and see if it would be a good professional fit. They said their classroom-based experiences were invaluable in helping them decide if teaching was a match. At the same time, there is an enduring tension between children’s need for well prepared teachers and novice teachers’ need to learn to teach through classroom experience ideally assisting a more experienced, good teacher (Skovholt, 2004). I found that the participants traveled two paths into teaching,

**Table 4.2 - Paths Into Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Changers</th>
<th>“I Always Wanted to Teach”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Katalina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 1 participant’s response to this question was lost, n=12.

**Career Changers:** Nine participants changed their career path in college or shortly after graduation to pursue teaching. Each of the nine participants found an opportunity to work with children in an educative capacity but not necessarily school-based before enrolling in a teacher preparation program. These early experiences provided the impetus for them to change careers and become teachers. The thread that linked the career changes is that they wanted meaningful, sustained learning connections with children and were willing to sacrifice some degree of financial
stability to achieve it. Anjali summed up this group’s perspective, “I eventually realized that money couldn’t buy me happiness.”

“I Always Wanted to Teach”: Two participants began working with children as early as middle school but traveled their own unique paths into teaching. Katalina said she always wanted to work with children but planned to work with children as a child psychologist. Her decision to enter teaching after college graduation was a “last minute, sporadic decision.” Teach for America presented her with an opportunity to teach she couldn’t resist because she felt she could make more of a difference with children who really needed her.

Jessica was clear in middle school that she wanted to work with children but wasn’t sure of how because she had varied interests in theater, political science and children. In high school, Jessica combined her interest in theater and teaching by directing plays. This experience led to a paid theater apprenticeship in college where she studied political science. Her political science major enabled her to attend to individual children’s needs preparing them to become good citizens within a political context. She created this path into teaching with each step she took.

Overall, the participants in both groups entered teaching motivated by their hopes to make a positive difference in children’s lives, tempered by their concerns about the growing professional instability and low pay. These views are in keeping with earlier research that found that the intrinsic rewards of teaching, like relationships with students, keep teachers in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Ingersoll, 2004; Lortie, 1975). Given the participants’ mixed feelings, I asked them to describe their hopes and concerns about becoming teachers.
All the participants hoped to help their students succeed academically and in life. Their hopes were focused on either themselves or on their students,

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<td>Ron</td>
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*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants responses were lost, n=12.

**Self:** Two participants framed their hopes for teaching in terms of the abilities they wanted to develop so they could become and be seen as good teachers. This focus is an indication of their concern about how they are doing and how they appear in the eyes of more experienced educators (Skovholdt, 2004). Liz’s response is typical,

Some of my hopes are that I get to a position where I do feel comfortable where people are asking me questions instead of me asking questions. I sort of get an understanding, a repertoire of experiences that I can then share with others without having them shared with me.

There is a desire to move beyond being a novice teacher by developing a repertoire of desirable resources to share with other teachers. Their hopes are about developing professional expertise, strengthening their classroom practice with children, and becoming mentors to their colleagues. At the core of these hopes is their desire to be viewed as a good teacher by their colleagues because of their students’ consistent academic and social success.
**Children:** The eight participants in this group framed their professional hopes in terms of their capacity to teach their students and prepare them for successful lives. Heather’s view was typical,

> I think teaching and education has the potential to be life altering for students both in their perceptions of themselves and their abilities, not only academically but to relate to other people and to know themselves better. I hope to be the kind of teacher that plays on the strengths of her students and can help them develop to their potential.

This group measured their success as teachers in terms of their students’ success in school and life. They believed that their work, when done well, could change the way children saw themselves for the better, which could ultimately improve their life outcomes. Helping children develop to their full potential is an individualized process that requires teachers to see their students as unique individuals. It also rests on teachers using their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to imagine unimaginable lives for their students. Jessica clarifies,

> I think it’s about recognizing potential in every child. A good teacher can recognize the strengths of any child and bring out those strengths and make them feel good about what they do. Good teachers do what they have to do to help their students do good in the world.

Recognizing each child’s potential rests the belief that each child is an individual whose strengths and struggles can be supported. For this group, it is the teacher’s job to see each child’s potential, nurture it in ways that the children can see their own potential and feel good about it. It is engaging children in their own learning that can help them succeed in school and in life for themselves and society. To accomplish this, the group believed that good teachers adjusted their approaches to meet each child’s needs so that they could carry it forward throughout their lives.
Being a good teacher for this group meant meeting children’s needs so that they can become productive adults who work toward social justice in society.

Both groups wanted their students to do well in school and in life. The focus of the two participants in the first group was to become respected teachers who could mentor and support other teachers. Imbedded in their hope is to be seen as good teachers whose students are consistently successful. The second group of eight participants included five participants who described their students at types in the previous chapter. However, when describing their hopes about becoming good teachers, they described children as individuals. They also measured their professional success in terms of their students’ school and life success. These aspirations to become good teacher who are respected by colleagues and whose students succeed in school and life can sustain them in moments of doubt. For novice teachers working in classrooms with understandably limited expertise, appearing to be good teachers would be a daunting task that could raise concerns.

**Concerns**

While the participants’ hopes to become good teachers by focusing on themselves or their students, they had a wide range of concerns that focused on professional development, preparation, financial stability and equity.

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<th>Policy Based</th>
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Due to technical difficulties, 3 participants responses were lost, n=12.

**Constrained Practice:** The two participants in this group were concerned about not having access to ongoing professional development opportunities. Jessica’s view is typical,

I think my fears are that I’ll be constricted by all of the other terrible things going on around my students or around me that I’ll get burned out or tired.

This group worried that without consistent access to professional development, they couldn’t keep their classroom practice current to meet their students’ changing needs. As a result of their own constrained knowledge, they wouldn’t grow as teachers. Not being able to sustain their own development would leave them vulnerable to constraining their students’ possibilities by falling back on the teaching approaches they know without being able to create new ones to meet students’ needs because they didn’t know enough. Using a constrained practice would lack the innovation and adaptability these participants viewed as elements of good teaching (Horowitz, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

**Unsure:** Two participants raised concerns about their financial stability and personal capabilities to work in rigid school settings. Ron’s view is typical,

I’m not making enough money to live on so I have to make serious decisions about that. But I love it so much that I could consider living on cardboard and beans and continuing to do it. The next step of the future, that’s tricky. Will I find a job in a public school that I can make living? Will I burn out? Will I still love it? Will I still feel I can be good at that? There are a mixture of thoughts.

This group felt they had to choose. The could work as teachers in schools that didn’t necessarily serve children’s needs well and have personal financial stability or they could work in private schools for significantly less money that does serve children’s
needs well. Choosing between their quality of life and their passion for teaching casts a long shadow, leading them to question the wisdom of their career choice.

Their core concern was similar to the first group, what kind of teacher would they become in the classroom while being buffeted about among the varied contexts of teaching. They didn’t want to lose their regard for their students’ individuality and humanity in order to support themselves and their families. These concerns and questions are structural but experienced by these participants in deeply personal ways. Nourishing children without being able to nourish themselves or their families pits their needs against their students’ needs, a tragic choice because no matter what they choose, something of value is lost.

**Policy Based:** Two participants were also concerned about money but not for themselves. They were concerned about the implications of school funding for school quality and children’s academic success. Anjali’s view is typical,

Money availability in schools is always a problem. There never seems to be enough money and it seems like we’re always talking about cuts, areas we can do away with. I especially hear about it more in public schools, not private. Then you hear about programs that seem so important getting cut, like the arts and music are sometimes the first to get cut because a lot of people, I guess, in the general public don’t feel that they’re very important.

While this group raised the question about school funding in both public and private schools, the funding in public schools seemed more problematic, a concern shared by the first two groups. Here, they were also examining the question of which children had access to art and music, who didn’t and why. For example, they wondered why the general public didn’t believe that art and music were necessities in public school when most private schools provide it because it supports academic
achievement (Eisner, 2004). Perhaps it was about how society valued, or didn’t value the children in public school.

School funding is an important part of school quality because it can create more opportunities for children to demonstrate a greater range of capacities. Financial resources provide necessary support for materials, teachers, programs and trips, elements of a rigorous academic, physical and artistically based curriculum.

This group noted the link between the level of school funding and the value society placed on the children inside those underfunded schools. Their unspoken, but lingering question is, why is there abundant funding for private schools while public schools never have enough? Their concern about school funding reveals a deeper concern about educational equity and fundamental fairness to provide a well-resourced quality education for all children.

**Unprepared:** Three participants were concerned about their lack of experience and therefore feeling unprepared to meet the full range of children’s needs. Liz’s view is typical,

My concerns are that, right now especially, I sometimes just feel unprepared. I don’t have enough experience.

This group said they felt unprepared but it seemed that perhaps there were times when this group felt like they could handle the classroom but at other times they were confronted with situations that left them feeling at a loss. Seemingly, they didn’t feel ready enough to teach on their own. Working in the classroom is challenging for novice teachers because it is unpredictable and there are many times when the gap between what is known and the demands of the situation are too
great for novice teachers to bridge independently. It is the not knowing how to help children in varied situations that is the problem of novices having to appear expert without having developed the expertise (Skovholt, 2004). Liz continues,

I see things and I don’t know why they’re happening. I see the way kids engage or in terms of academic work or social situations I don’t necessarily know why they are doing it. I see things, hear things and I think that’s wrong. I think that’s not right. I think something is wrong but I don’t know so I tend to just shy away and pass it off to other people because I don’t feel qualified to take the leap sometimes.

Supporting children’s healthy development means that adults need to provide consistent support, often without being asked. Turning a blind eye to children’s conflicts and transgressions teaches them that it is permissible to break social rules without consequence, which can interfere with children’s academic achievement. This can also contribute to a pervasive school culture of danger that lacks safety, trust and security that can make the intellectual risks necessary to learn impossible (Miller, 2008; LaRusso, Romer & Selman, 2007; Piaget, 1968).

The fear of getting it wrong can lead novice teachers to turn a blind eye, even when they know it is wrong and it sabotages their own aspirations to become good teachers who support their students to succeed in school and life. Looking away from conflicts and transgressions is problematic because doing so can position novice teachers as bystanders, tacitly sanctioning the relational violence, isolation and silencing of social exclusion and civilized oppression (Kahn & Kammerman, 2001; Harvey, 1999).

This group focused on the dilemma of wanting to support children in difficult situations without feeling confident enough to productively intervene. Their concern rests on the fantasy that they can be prepared in advance to handle every possible
interaction before entering the classroom. In truth, teaching, at any point in the career and especially for novice teachers, requires risk taking, courage and support. This group’s concern suggests that they hadn’t mastered sufficient child development theory to take a reasonable risk to intervene on behalf of children, developed the courage to ask for the support they need to intervene.

Overall, an examination of the participants’ hopes and concerns reveal a conflict between the reasons they became teachers and what they think they can accomplish in an inequitably, under-resourced school system. The participants hoped to provide support for their students to succeed in school and life. They were concerned that the inequitable funding and resources coupled with inexperience could become barriers to their ability to enact their hopes for contributing to their students’ school and life success.

The stress of not earning enough money to support themselves and having to appear expert without expertise can pose a challenge to novice teachers’ hopes to support their students’ academic and social development. Because the participants are wrestling with the gap between their hopes and concerns, this is a ripe moment for intervention, mentorship and support so that they can fulfill their professional aspirations. The danger of having a large influx of novice teachers at once is the potential hesitancy to intervene, understandable but problematic because they can abandon children when they need adult guidance the most. Because teachers represent the school and society in their students’ eyes, it is a powerful moment for children who experience and witness this (Kahn & Kammerman, 2001). These tacit messages about children who receive support and don’t can begin to teach
unintended lessons about privilege, power, social exclusion that sustain an unjust, stratified society using civilized oppression (Harvey, 1999).

What stands out in the participants’ narrative of hopes and concerns is their desire to support their students’ success in school to benefit themselves and society despite major concerns about their financial stability; being burned out by a school system with heavy demands and scarce supports; and lacking sufficient experience to intervene on behalf of children to maintain a safe, respectful, collaborative learning environment. The personal fulfillment, or intrinsic reward of working with children was a form of compensation that ascribed value to their work not reflected in society or low teachers’ salaries. These intrinsic rewards, in the face of teacher ‘accountability’, sustained the participants’ paths into teaching, which were neither direct nor easy and shape their views about what constitutes highly qualified teachers and good teaching.

**Highly Qualified v. Good Teaching**

The enactment of NCLB in 2000 and more recently Race to the Top directed national education reform efforts to redefine standards of classroom practice and expectations for children’s academic achievement. These policies guaranteed a highly qualified teacher in every classroom without clearly defining what constitutes a highly qualified teacher (Ravitch, 2010). Becoming a certified teacher, as a measure of teacher quality, is a challenging process due to widely varied state certification requirements and teacher preparation program rigor. The funds of knowledge certification tests assess tend to be,

1. novice teachers’ knowledge of academic content,
2. novice teachers’ knowledge of children and child development theory, and
3. generally accepted pedagogical practices.

Teacher preparation programs, are often, but no longer exclusively, based in higher education institutions, attest to the capacity of each candidate to work with children directly. However, the standards to which novice teachers are held vary widely and tend to have the following components,

1. Standardized tests of general knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and for secondary school teachers content knowledge;
2. Higher education course work at either the undergraduate or graduate levels; and
3. Semester long or yearlong clinical placements in classrooms with children to be mentored by an experienced teacher and teacher educator.

I wondered how this policy context shaped the participants’ views about good teaching. To elicit their perspectives, I asked the participants whether a highly qualified teacher is the same as a good teacher to see what connections, if any, they made among their child development course, student teaching placement and definition of good teaching. Admittedly, this was a challenging question to ask especially because the definition of ‘highly qualified’ isn’t clearly delineated. At the same time, this lack of clarity provided an opportunity for the participants to fill in those gaps with their own interpretations.

Given this, I wasn’t surprised when the participants struggled a bit with this question because they didn’t really know how to define a ‘highly qualified’ teacher. Claudia’s view is typical,

I’m not really clear about what constitutes a highly qualified teacher. But I imagine it’s measured with a test. If that’s the case, then, yes, I think there’s a difference.

The participants said they didn’t think that external measures, like standardized tests, that assess the markers of expertise but don’t constitute actual expertise, can’t
ensure good teaching in the classroom. When asked if highly qualified teachers and
good teaching were the same, the participants responded in the following ways,

**Table 4.5 - Highly Qualified Teachers v. Good Teachers**

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| Michael      | Anjali    | Valerie  |
| Katalina     | Emily     | Ron      |
| Heather      |           | Melanie  |
| Jessica      |           |          |
| Amaya        |           |          |
| Claudia      |           |          |
| Liz          |           |          |

**Not the Same:** Among the seven participants who said that highly qualified
teachers were not the same as good teachers, Amaya’s response is typical,

I don’t think necessarily they’re the same. You could be qualified technically,
like you could have all the credentials, you could have all the classes in the
world, but that does not necessarily make you good. If you don’t like what
you do; if you’re doing it for a paycheck; if you’re doing it because you used to
like it but now you just have to; that could affect it. If you don’t really
understand the kids; if you’re tired – there’s a lot that can affect – so I think
credentials and being qualified in technical terms doesn’t necessarily make
you a good teacher.

For this group, ‘technical’ credentials like courses, degrees and test scores don’t
necessarily make you a good teacher. A teacher could have the ‘technical’
qualifications necessary to be a highly qualified teacher without being a good
teacher in the classroom. Similarly, you could be a good teacher without being
considered highly qualified.

They viewed good teaching as linked to teachers’ ability to understand and
connect with children, requiring care, attention and intellect. For them, good
teaching is about more than knowing the technical aspects of teaching because you
can’t be a good teacher without being emotionally present. Understanding children,
how they learn and helping them make connections are characteristics of adaptive expertise and good teaching (Horowitz, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Nieto, 2003). However, there isn’t a test to measure whether someone likes teaching and understands children. While credentials and certifications are important, but they are only one way to identify the potential for teacher quality. This group saw highly qualified teachers, demonstrated mastery of abstract theories and book-based information that can be tested and graded but doesn’t necessarily mean they can teach. In the end, this group didn’t see highly qualified teachers and good teaching as the same.

**The Same:** Two participants viewed good teaching and highly qualified teachers as the same. They viewed the experience of teacher preparation as an important part of the process of becoming a good teacher. Emily’s view is typical, I think it helps to be highly qualified to make you into a good teacher, but I think you can be a good teacher with less experience or more experience with less education or more education. I think that through teacher education you do get some sense of where kids are – something to build on. I can’t imagine like being a teaching fellow and starting to teach without some framework, without a solid framework and experience student teaching, observing, all of those things, which I think make me more highly qualified.

For this group, being a highly qualified teacher was the beginning of becoming a good teacher. They thought teacher preparation programs were an indispensable element of becoming good teachers because they provide qualifications and a solid framework for good teaching.

Interestingly, this group’s thinking about highly qualified teachers and good teaching isn’t so different from the previous group’s thinking. Both groups see highly qualified teachers and good teaching similarly however this group saw highly
qualified teachers and good teaching as linked, suggesting a hierarchy. Highly qualified teachers needed credentials to become good teachers but weren’t necessarily good teachers at the time they earned their credentials. Their credentials indicated their potential to become good teachers but didn’t constitute good teaching.

**Not Sure:** Three participants weren’t sure if highly qualified teachers and good teaching were the same. Ron’s response is typical,

I could say that what makes a good teacher, and what makes a qualified teacher – are the same thing, but how you have to show it, I don’t know. I think if I were hiring somebody, would I hire someone who talks about great things or somebody who seems to have a stable track record. That certainly, more than just a little bit affects the way you teach your kids. And every teacher has a very different experience. Every teacher has taught at different kinds of places, have different experiences, different lengths of experiences, different training, different degrees to which they really absorb their training or discarded it or intelligently filtered it.

This group seemed to open a ‘third space’ to construct another view of the relationship between highly qualified teachers and good teachers. They focused on the core dilemma of the policy – how would a highly qualified teacher show that they are also a good teacher. Similar to the previous group, this group saw a connection between highly qualified teachers and good teaching based on their experience attaining generalized qualifications based on educational policies. The example they used was the hiring process. Moving between their own individuality and their perception of education administrators deciding whether or not to hire them is a familiar but unclear process. For many, finding a teaching job is very stressful because they need to answer questions they may not feel fully able to answer, feeding their concerns about whether they know enough and are they really ready.
It is a process where they must approximate expertise before they have fully developed it.

This group wondered how administrators could discern those applicants with the potential to become good teachers from those who were highly qualified but lacked the probability of becoming good teachers. How could these administrators differentiate the candidates who say what they actually think from those who say what the administrator wants to hear just to get the job. This is a key question that sits at the heart of their individual worry, how do you know someone is or can become a good teacher, which is the continuing dilemma of education policy reforms at the national level. It seemed that similar to the previous group, this group embraced the reality that being highly qualified isn’t the same as good teaching but viewed them as connected.

All the participants shared the view that highly qualified and good teaching weren’t mutually exclusive. The first group of seven participants said they weren’t the same, viewing highly qualified teachers as being ‘technically’ qualified and good teachers worked effectively with children. The second group of two participants viewed highly qualified and good teaching as being on a continuum where being a highly qualified teacher prepared in a teacher preparation program could lead to becoming a good teacher. Lastly, three participants weren’t sure, opening a ‘third space’ and using the familiarity of the hiring process to construct their view as they responded that being highly qualified wasn’t the same as good teaching. In light of these responses, I wondered how the participants defined good teaching.

Definitions of Good Teaching
Good teaching is at the core of the participants’ desires for their students and themselves. Given this, I wondered how the participants defined good teaching. I found that the participants believed good teaching revolved around teachers’ ability to make connections between each child and the academic content being taught in a supportive classroom environment and differed in their emphasis on those connections,

Table 4.6 - Definitions of Good Teaching

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Jessica, Anjali, Emily, Michael, Katalina, Ron, Heather, Melanie, Liz, Valerie

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants’ responses were lost, n=12.

**Reach Each Child**: Three participants defined good teaching as the ability to reach each child. Anjali’s recognition of the importance of a just learning environment is typical,

Good teaching is being able to teach a whole group and reaching each and every child in that group at whatever level they’re at. …everyone in the class should feel equal. Students shouldn’t feel that one student is better than the others.

This group focused on the interplay of learning and justice in the classroom. For them, it was insufficient for children to learn using individual connections with their teacher alone. Reaching each child meant reaching them as learners and moral people in a just classroom environment where children connected with each other. They attended to the larger value of an equitable learning environment where all children are valued, seen and included. For this group, good teaching meant
interacting with each child in their class as intellectual and moral people situated in
the sociocultural context of an equitable, just classroom.

Engages: The first group emphasized the importance of reaching each child
in a just learning environment, but didn’t describe how to create it. The four
participants in this group described good teaching as engaging with children by
listening to and talking with them. Ron’s description is typical,

…there’s some degree of disinterest that’s necessary because the most
touchy-feely teacher I had in elementary school was my second grade
teacher. I have sour memories of her because I think she was doing it more
for herself than the kids. But I remember my first grade teacher put so much
energy into finding something that was genuinely interesting for kids that
made them feel good about being engaged in this experience of being in
school. She certainly was no caretaker. A teacher is an artist; a teacher is a
shepherd; a teacher is an example.

This description emphasizes the importance of maintaining the tension between
engagement and disinterest to avoid enmeshment because too much affection
interfered with learning. To identify children’s needs, teachers need to maintain a
certain ‘disinterest’ that can be created by child development theory. While creating
connections to engage children in learning are critical elements of learning, good
teachers maintain the tension between connection and ‘disinterest’ to sustain
learning a characteristic of using ethnotheories mediated by child development
theory to understand children’s behaviors, interests and achievement. Specifically,
teachers’ ethnotheories serve as resources to individualize and apply a universal
child development theory. In this example, ethnotheories provided a link between
the experience of good teaching as a child and child development theory that
narrates what made it an example of good teaching. This description offers insight
on how to reach each child to engage them in learning through using children’s interests to create a link they build on and expand.

**Adjusts:** Picking up on the theme of engagement and disinterest, the two participants in this group defined good teaching as the ability to note students’ engagement in the lesson, assess whether there is enough engagement to sustain learning and then adjust their lesson plans at any time to sustain or re-engage each child’s attention. Liz’s response is typical,

I think a good teacher can sort of look at their students at any given day and say, “This is what we’re gonna do” and, if it’s not working, throw it out. That was the first lesson I learned and one of the best was that it’s ok to have a plan and get rid of it. …a good teacher is the teacher who reads her audience, or his audience, and is able to say, “Ok. This is going to be really awesome.” And also understand that maybe this really awesome thing isn’t going to be awesome in this moment...

For this group, good teachers need to have the confidence to trust what they know about their students in particular and children in general and academic content so that they can assess and create multiple intellectual bridges between what the children actually know and what they need to learn in an emotionally supportive environment, which can take place in a moment.

Each group addressed learning as part of their definition of good teaching. As such, their definitions of good teaching are anchored in the participants’ views about children, themselves and classroom practice supported by a set of beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning. Their views are framed by the broader context of education policy and teacher certification expectations. I wondered how the participants viewed their definitions of good teaching in relation to the evolving
education policies that govern teacher evaluations and calls for highly qualified teachers in every classroom.

**Whose Advice do the Participants Choose/Decide to Take?**

An important element of teacher preparation programs is the clinical component of student teaching because it provides novice teachers with the opportunity to integrate theory and practice. I wondered how the participants’ school-based colleagues shaped their conceptions of children, beliefs about child development theory and good teaching. I asked the participants if they would allow their colleagues to influence their teaching practice,

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**Yes**:

Among the nine participants who allowed their colleagues to shape their practice, they were careful to note that they were open to advice from their colleagues whose practice they admired. Claudia’s view is typical,

I work with someone who didn’t share my views on children or my teaching philosophy or anything so I didn’t take much of her advice. But there are certain teachers in the school who I would follow just because of interactions I have had I feel like they are who I want to become as a teacher. There’s this one woman I call the child whisperer -- anything she says, she can do no wrong by them. There are other people who say things like “he’s troubled”, “he’s so bad” or “he has issues.” I think that if I would have said “Okay, she’s the head teacher, so she must be smarter than me, she must know.” Then I
would go along and say “yeah, he’s a bad kid” even though that’s not what I want to do.

There is clear openness among most of the participants to take advice from colleagues they want to become. This group used their beliefs about good teaching and how children should be treated as criteria to decide whose advice they would follow. When their cooperating teachers don’t embody the characteristics of good teaching, they do what the must to get along in the classroom and seek out those teachers they aspire to become. Given this, understanding novice teachers’ beliefs about good teaching and children mediated their choice of whose advice and practice they would follow.

**No:** The three participants said they wouldn’t allow their colleagues to shape their practice with children because they didn’t want to become like them. Amaya’s view is typical,

I have to work hard and not let them get to me. I can remember my first year teaching and having troubles with some of my students’ behavior. After one was removed from my class for whatever reason, teachers said “Oh, now that’s not your problem anymore.” But I don’t want to think about him like that. I’m the minority when it comes to that so I didn’t feel like saying anything because I knew they wouldn’t understand. And I think that if I listen to everything that they said, I would have a negative view of these kids and I didn’t want to do that.

Similar to the first group, this group didn’t follow their colleagues’ advice about practice because they didn’t want to emulate their views about and practice with children. This group struggled to hold on to their vision of good teaching and avoid being burned out without models to support them. They focused their efforts on resisting their colleagues’ example and advice.
Katalina went beyond the resistance Amaya described. Not only did Katalina resist her colleagues’ advice but she also tried to use child development theory to reshape their teaching practice. She said,

My viewpoints are pretty dissimilar from almost everybody else that I work with. It’s been a really difficult year and I’m like “I’m not gonna go back” but then I think somebody has to kind of help in terms of pushing the school. There are a lot of things the school is doing like the kids do really well on exams and read really well. So there’s that structure in place but they need to grow in other areas. The school started with the viewpoint of ‘these children’ need strictness to be successful in school, negating the fact that they’re kids developing like other kids and so they need those things too.

Katalina describes her turmoil in returning to her school but then who would help the children. Her desire to inject a more humane approach to learning by using child development theory to establish an equitable classroom environment kept her in the school despite the harsh treatment of children she worked to soften. It is an uphill battle because the structure of her school doesn’t recognize the humanity inside the students or teachers. If she were to accept the school’s position without question, she would engage in the relational interactions that serve to silence children’s voices and desires in the name of strictness, compliance, order and discipline. Despite this context, Katalina finds a way to challenge her colleagues’ approaches to teaching children with child development theory and modeling good teaching. She wants the children in her school to be nurtured in ways that encourage their healthy development and learning by moving her colleagues away from treating children harshly to classroom practices grounded in child development theory.

Similar to the first group, these three participants held their aspirations for becoming a good teacher and in the absence of good models to emulate, they constructed their teaching based on the practices they wanted to avoid. Katalina
went so far as to try and change her colleagues’ views and practices and use child development theory. The participants in this group believed they needed to turn away from their colleagues because those teachers treated children in ways that didn’t fit their vision of good teaching. Although the participants responded to this question differently, they both used the same rationale. They would follow their colleagues’ advice about practice if they matched the participants’ beliefs about good teaching.

The participants were unified in their desire to avoid blaming children for academic or behavioral struggles that arose in the classroom, choosing to use child development theory to inform their practice. The first group allowed their colleagues to shape their practice because they were in school settings that supported teaching grounded in child development theory, which matched this group’s beliefs about good teaching. The second group of participants resisted their colleagues’ advice because they worked in contexts that didn’t ground their teaching practice in child development theory, which didn’t match this group’s beliefs about good teaching. This suggests the importance of exploring novice teachers’ beliefs about good teaching, which has been called ‘the teacher in the head’ (Lortie, 1975). The participants’ beliefs about good teaching emerged as a significant mediator of the advice they would follow about their classroom practice. Understanding the roots of their beliefs about good teaching provides novice teachers with greater insights on their interactions with colleagues.

**Chapter Summary**
In this chapter, I examined the participants’ beliefs about good teaching in policy and practice. Throughout, there was a great deal of cohesion among the participants’ responses except when they described their concerns about teaching.

**Table 4.8 - Participants’ Categorical Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart Names</th>
<th>Number of Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paths into Teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Career Changers (9)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Always Wanted to Teach (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Self (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Children (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Constrained Practice (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unsure (2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Policy Based (2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Unprepared (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Qualified v. Good Teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not the Same (7)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Same (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not Sure (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Good Teaching</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reach Each Child (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Engages (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adjusts (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to Take Colleagues’ Advice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Yes (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No (2)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Examining this pattern of responses reveals shared beliefs about good teaching among the participants, suggesting that they drew on professional funds of knowledge when responding. Most of the participants are career changers who entered teaching motivated by their hopes to improve their students' lives through education. They also believed that a highly qualified teacher and good teaching aren’t the same, believing that good teachers actively engage each child to help
them develop their unique abilities. The participants said that they were willing to take advice from their colleagues as long as they enacted practices in line with their beliefs about good teaching. This cohesion dissipated when the participants outlined their concerns about entering teaching, which suggests that their concerns were grounded in their ethnotheories. This follows a similar pattern from the previous chapter where the participants’ views about the limits of child development theory in the classroom were also divergent and grounded in their ethnotheories.

**What are Novice Teachers’ Beliefs about Good Teaching?**

When I developed this research sub-question, I anticipated that it would have a narrower focus on the ways the participants defined good teaching. However, I found that the participants used their beliefs about good teaching in a variety of ways I hadn’t anticipated. In making the decision to become teachers, the participants’ early experiences with their own teachers informed their choice to teach. Whether they chose teaching after pursuing another career or pursued it as their first choice, the participants were drawn to teaching in the hope of helping children learn. While the participants’ ethnotheories informed their career choice, their shared professional teaching knowledge informed their beliefs about the link between the policy of having a highly qualified teacher in every classroom and the practice of good teaching to which they all aspire. The participants’ beliefs about good teaching are outlined in the following sections,

Paths into Teaching, Hopes and Concerns
Highly Qualified v. Good Teaching
Definitions of Good Teaching
Good Teaching and the Advice the Participants Choose to Take
**Paths into Teaching, Hopes and Concerns for their Career:** Most of the participants entered teaching after pursuing another career. In addition, most entered teaching with hopes to improve their students' life chances, attracted to the intrinsic rewards of teaching (Lortie, 1975),

**Table 4.9 - Paths into Teaching and Hopes for Their Career**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paths into Teaching*</th>
<th>Hopes**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Changers</td>
<td>I Always Wanted to Teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 1 participant’s response was lost, n=12.
**Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants’ responses were lost, n=12.

Based on the cohesion among the participants' responses and their personal diversity, it seems that the participants’ paths into teaching and hopes for their teaching careers are grounded in their shared funds of professional knowledge. At the same time, the participants voiced a range of concerns about the consequences of this career choice for them,

**Table 4.10 - Concerns about Becoming Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerns</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constrained Practice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Based</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprepared</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 3 participants’ responses were lost, n=12.

The distribution of the participants’ concerns suggests that they are grounded in their ethnotheories because there isn’t a clear, dominant view. The two participants in the first group worried about their classroom practice being constrained by not having access to ongoing professional development to keep their pedagogy fresh to address children’s changing needs. Two participants in the second group worried
about their ability to take care of themselves and their families, torn between choosing a position at a school that pays less but provides ongoing professional development and a public school that pays well but provides little professional development and risking burnout. In the absence of professional development, they worried about burning out and interfering with their students’ learning. The participants in the first two groups saw professional development as an important element of good teaching and the second group considered the possibility of accepting less salary to get it.

The two participants in the third group voiced a more policy-based concern about the apparent culture of scarcity due to sustained educational underfunding of public schools as compared with the financial abundance found in many private schools. Their concern was grounded in a deeper worry about providing equitable educational opportunities for all children. The concern for educational equity emerged among the three participants in a more personal way in their sense of being unprepared. Their dilemma arose when they encountered a situation they didn’t know how to productively respond and so, turned a blind eye to it even though they know it is wrong to leave children to navigate the complexities of conflict on their own.

**Highly Qualified v. Good Teaching:** The participants’ views about the link between highly qualified teachers and good teaching provided a window on to their thinking about the link between policy and practice,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highly Qualified v. Good Teaching</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[12]</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
All the participants shared the view that being a highly qualified teacher and a good teacher weren’t mutually exclusive. Most of the participants saw highly qualified teachers as being ‘technically’ qualified without necessarily being good teachers. The two participants in the second group viewed being a highly qualified teacher as someone with certification but lacking experience and professional expertise in the classroom. The last group of three participants constructed their understanding as they responded to the question. For them, being a highly qualified teacher meant that they had the beginnings of what it took to be a good teacher but may not be a good teacher yet. These responses indicate the participants’ awareness of the ways in which educational policies impact their practice, evaluation and pedagogical choices. Their critical stance suggests that they are unlikely to accept and implement school rules and policies that could silence and exclude children’s voices without questions because of their understanding of child development theory and beliefs about what constitutes good teaching (Kahn & Hammerness, 2001; Harvey, 1999).

**Definitions of Good Teaching:** The participants believed good teaching was comprised of teachers’ ability to make connections between each individual child and the academic content being taught in a supportive classroom environment. The participants differed in their emphasis on how to make those connections,

**Table 4.12 - Definitions of Good Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reach Each Child</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>
All the participants focused on ways to connect with their students to support learning. They also believed good teaching is a conversation between the teacher and his/her students. At the center of this conversation is the participants’ desire to learn as much as they can about their students as a foundation on which they can construct meaningful learning experiences.

The first group focused on good teachers creating a just and equitable learning environment where every child is seen, heard and valued regardless of their achievement level. The second group drew on their understanding of child development theory to note the importance of good teachers needing a degree of disinterest to be sure the children’s needs are in the center of their practice. The third group also drew on their understanding of child development theory and described good teaching as the ability to make choices about how to adjust their teaching to meet their students’ needs in the moment.

In these definitions of good teaching, all the participants positioned children as unique individuals. This is a shift from the previous chapter where most of the participants viewed children as types. This shift seemed to open the conversation about equity and justice that was silent when the participants shared their beliefs about children and child development theory. Perhaps equity and justice emerged in the participants’ beliefs about good teaching because these beliefs were grounded in their larger purpose for teaching. By focusing on the needs of their students using child development theory, the participants addressed the importance of educational
equity and a just learning environment as a component of good teaching. In their definitions of good teaching, the participants described a relationally based pedagogy that weaves the children’s knowledge and needs together with the lessons they plan to teach. Their definitions further suggest that good teachers engage in the negotiation, conversation and gentle guidance characteristic of authoritative pedagogy that positions teachers as facilitators of children’s learning, which supports educational equity, justice, academic and social success for children across all domains (Schwebel, 2004; Young, 2004; Lareau, 2003; Harvey, 1999; Baumrind, 1991).

**Good Teaching and the Advice the Participants Choose to Take:** All the participants were willing to follow advice from their colleagues if they felt there was a match between their view of good teaching and their colleagues’ practice with children. When there was a mismatch, the participants resisted their colleagues’ advice. In making this decision, the participants seemed to use child development theory to assess the quality of their colleagues’ interactions with children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allow</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Due to technical difficulties, 1 participant’s response was lost, n=12.

Both groups had the same goal, to become good teachers. To accomplish this, most were willing to accept and follow the advice of the colleagues whose practice fit their definition of good teaching. The first group of nine participants said they would allow their colleagues to offer them advice to shape their practice. The second group of two participants resisted their colleagues’ advice because of their harsh
interactions with children. One of the participants went further to not only resist following their advice but also used child development theory to encourage her colleagues to change their practice toward the gentler, more negotiated pedagogy she practiced. The participants entered their student teaching placements open to their school-based colleagues’ advice to help them become good teachers. Most of the participants would take advice from their school-based peers because they modeled practices that coincided with their vision of good teaching. The two participants who resisted their school-based colleagues’ advice did so because they used practices that posed challenges to children’s development rather than support, which was not an approach they wanted to emulate.

Overall, the participants’ beliefs about good teaching provide an important insight into the ways they construct connections among their ethnotheories, child development theory, and classroom practice. Addressing the link between policy and practice surfaced the participants’ beliefs about inequitable structures that support some children’s academic success but not others, leading them to interrogate their ethnotheories to perhaps align them with equitable, developmentally grounded purposes for teaching.

The eight of the participants described children as types in the previous chapter. However, in defining good teaching these participants repositioned children as individuals who deserve individualized, meaningful learning experiences in equitable, just learning environments. This shift indicates that engaging in the guided reflection of the interview supported the participants’ capacity to integrate child development theory with their ethnotheories to reach their goal to become good
teachers who support children’s healthy development in challenging and just classrooms.

In this way, the participants’ shared value for child development theory remained unique to each participant informed by their individual ethnotheories, which can, with guided reflections, support the development of adaptive expertise (Horowitz, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Since the participants share professional funds of knowledge and value children’s individuality and complexities, they share a common goal – to maximize children’s learning within equitable, just learning environments that support healthy development. How or if the participants apply their emergent professional knowledge, rooted in their individualized understanding of child development theory, to interpret and perhaps re-interpret a familiar teaching situation is the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter 5

Child Development Theory Applied
For Interpreting a Vignette

We can know more than we can tell.
Michael Polanyi, 1966

Overview

The previous two chapters focused on the participants’ self-reported beliefs about children, child development theory and good teaching. I found that despite their diverse academic preparation and life experiences, all the participants believed that child development theory was a valuable fund of professional knowledge for their graduate coursework and classroom practice. I further found that the participants’ beliefs about good teaching helped them determine whose advice to follow about teaching and whose to ignore. I noticed that as the participants answered questions about good teaching six participants shifted from seeing children as types to seeing them as unique individuals. In this chapter, I focus on if and how novice teachers apply child development theory to inform their interpretations of a vignette narrative (Daiute, 2014).

From my 15 years of experience teaching a child development course, I noticed that novice teachers need support to use child development theory in their classroom practice. Building on my graduate students’ questions about their
students, I used vignettes as teaching and reflection tools to provide a guided, shared experience using child development as both theory and method during course discussions and written assignments (See Appendix C). I also asked the students to keep track of their questions and interests during the semester to identify some of their own enduring interests about child development theory that they could then research further for their final assignment as a way to explicitly open a space for them to use their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to understand children’s behavior (See Appendix C).

Given this experience in my teaching, I chose to ask the participants to interpret the same vignette twice to see if and how they applied child development theory to a brief narrative description of a familiar classroom interaction. I chose a vignette I used successfully in my child development course for eight years with the expectation that the participants could relate personally to the dilemma posed in the vignette on their own terms using culturally familiar tools (Daiute, Buteau & Rawlins, 2001, Gutierrez Vaquedano-Lopez, Alvarez & Chiu, 1999). The purposeful silences in the vignette created opportunities for the participants to use their ethnotheories and/or child development theory to construct connections missing in the vignette (Daiute, Buteau & Rawlins, 2001; Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez & Chiu, 1999; Super & Harkness, 1993).

My research design included two opportunities for the participants to interpret the same vignette, before and after answering a series of interview questions about children, child development theory and good teaching. This design explores the possibility that guided reflections might provide enough scaffolding for novice
teachers to increase their use of child development theory in their classroom practice. It seemed that answering questions in the interview provided enough support for most of the participants to shift their beliefs about children from seeing them as types to seeing them as individuals.

My analysis of the participants’ vignette interpretations was guided by the following research questions,

1. How might novice teachers interpret their students’ behavior?
2. What funds of knowledge do they use to make these interpretations?

I found that five of the ten participants’ initial interpretations were focused on the child alone. After answering questions about children, child development theory and good teaching, five participants chose to revise their initial interpretations, shifting toward longer, more complex interpretations of the same vignette. I found that most of the participants who revised their interpretations shifted to focus mostly on the child interacting with his teacher. This shift suggests that important role guided reflection can have to encourage novice teachers to apply their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory as a tool to understand children’s behavior from the child’s perspective to hopefully help them craft a developmentally grounded intervention. I will discuss these findings in more detail in the following sections.

The Vignette as an Interpretive Tool focuses on the purpose for including the vignette;
Initial Vignette Interpretation focuses on the participants’ initial interpretation prior to answering any interview questions; and
Shifts in the Revised Vignette Interpretation focuses on the participants’ revised vignette interpretations after answering questions about children, child development theory and good teaching.

The Vignette as an Interpretive Tool for Using Child Development Theory
Asking the participants to hypothesize about what might be going on for a young boy who has difficulty lining up is a familiar situation for many novice teachers from their student teaching placements. Because it would be familiar, I thought I could ask the participants to explore their thinking in relation to it, hopefully applying child development theory as a lens through which they might attach multiple meanings to the child’s behavior described in the vignette.

One of the first responsibilities novice teachers have in their student teaching placements is assisting more experienced teachers with transitions and getting children to line up. It is a challenging and complex task that all teachers struggle to master. In this familiar interaction, I created explicit spaces for participants’ interpretations by not sharing Jason’s age, cultural identities or academic standing or the teacher’s gender, experience and age. I chose these particular silences because I wanted to engage multiple funds of knowledge, ethnotheories and child development theory. In order to attach meaning to the child’s behavior, the participants would need to draw on their ethnotheories and hopefully child development theory to fill in these purposeful voids and narrate multiple stories about the vignette (Daiute, 2014; Kenyon & Randall, 1997).

**The Vignette Text:** The vignette I used in this study describes an actual exchange that took place in a private school I wrote to invite students in my child development courses to hypothesize about what might be going on using child development theory. In writing the vignette, I muted contextual details from the actual exchange but retained enough detail to describe a familiar exchange,

At the end of the day, Jason's teacher confided to a colleague, "I just can't call his name one more time." Jason attends an all boys private school and lives
in the Bronx. Like a number of his classmates, he has a tutor but isn't in any serious academic trouble. In one-on-one interactions, he is charming and funny. During large group transitions or class line-ups, there are times when he screams, hits, or pushes his classmates. Lastly, his mother has called several of the boys in his class to try and arrange a time to play outside school but her requests have been turned down or ignored.

In the vignette, Jason responds to the uncertainty of transitions by enacting his feelings, which is a typical response to uncertainty in early childhood classrooms where appearance is reality and young children tend to lack the vocabulary to verbalize their feelings (Piaget, 1968). If Jason were older, in middle childhood then Jason’s response during the transition would be surprising and potentially frustrating for his teacher. In middle childhood, despite the increased brain development that enables greater self-regulation and increased vocabulary, Jason enacts his feelings when confronted with uncertainty of a transition outside the classroom. Whether the participants located Jason in early childhood or in middle childhood, it appears that something is going on for him that overrides his developmental and personality strengths Jason exhibits during the more structured work times in the classroom.

Transitions inside classrooms and between classrooms are especially complex and challenging because they are an in-between time, a liminal space, where the classroom rules don’t fully apply and the people, roles and demands are changing (Cardwell, 2005). For some children, like Jason, these transitional moments can feel unsettling while for others these moments can provide an emotional ‘breather’ where they can relax, regroup and prepare for the challenges of the next activity. In the vignette, Jason functions well during structured times and perhaps transitions in the classroom and performs well academically. However, Jason struggles during less structured times, like transitions outside the classroom.
As Jason struggles, his teacher seems to struggle. His/her statement, 'I just can't call his name one more time' can be interpreted in a variety of ways, for example,

1. The teacher is at his/her wits end with Jason’s behavior. Saying Jason’s name repeatedly isn’t working and is frustrating because s/he doesn’t have any other strategies to improve the situation, or
2. The teacher doesn’t want to keep singling Jason out to scold because it can give the children permission to isolate, silence and perhaps scapegoat Jason.

The teacher could feel frustrated with Jason and blame him for creating problems s/he can’t resolve. The teacher could feel frustrated with him/herself for not being able to figure out why Jason struggles during transitions. These are some of the possible interpretations participants could offer based on their student teaching placement experiences, ethnotheories and child development theory. I think they would be familiar with children who struggle with transitions for all kinds of reasons.

If Jason is in early childhood, he may not have developed sufficient self-regulation to control his impulses during line-up. Jason may be a child who needs explicit structure and struggles without it. There are many equally effective strategies and approaches to get Jason to behave during transitions like harsh punishment, shaming, time outs, reminders and discussion. The strategies that compel compliance, like harsh punishment and shaming will change Jason’s behavior without any understanding of or insight into why he struggled. Further, without that understanding, the strategies used may make things worse for Jason in the long run by pushing him out of the group and perhaps out of school (Fine, 1991). Strategies that try to understand why Jason might behave the way he does could include a time out for him to calm down, regroup so that he might talk about how he felt and
provide some ideas on what he thinks might help him. In the moment, the teacher could move closer to Jason and speak to him in a quiet concerned voice to refocus his attention on her in the moment and then follow it up with a conversation with Jason about what happened. Another strategy could be to give Jason early reminders that a transition is coming and provide him with a specific task that might help him navigate the transition smoothly. The reasons why Jason might behave this way are vast and I have included a few,

- Immaturity could make it difficult for Jason to control impulsive behavior without support;
- Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder could make it difficult for him to coordinate his inner feelings with an uncertain external context without guidance;
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, if being in unstructured activities like transitions serves as a trigger for a previous, traumatic experience, it would be difficult for him to independently enact the self regulation he displays during more structured and contained activities.

**Initial Vignette Interpretations**

I began the interview asking the participants to interpret this vignette before answering any interview questions to see if the participants would use their ethnotheories, child development theory or a combination of both. This was important because the initial interpretation drew on the participants’ readily available knowledge they would likely use to guide their classroom practice. I found the participants’ interpretations coalesced into three categories,

1. **Teacher/Child**: The focus is mostly on the teacher then briefly on Jason;
2. **Child Focused**: The focus is on Jason alone; and
3. **Child/Teacher**: The focus is mostly on Jason and his interaction with the teacher.

These three categories constitute a developmental trajectory moving from a focus on the teacher and perhaps themselves, to focus on the child alone, finally attending to
the relational dynamic between Jason and his teacher with the emphasis on Jason. This trajectory evolves from a nearly singular, egocentric focus on the teacher, the role closest to themselves, to the interpersonal complexity of student-teacher relationships.

In the initial interpretations, seven of the ten participants focused on Jason alone or on Jason in relation to his teacher, using a decentered developmental approach,

<p>| Table 5.1 - Initial Vignette Interpretation |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Teacher/Child</strong></th>
<th><strong>Child Focused</strong></th>
<th><strong>Child/Teacher</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
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<td>Jessica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Ron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katalina</td>
<td>Liz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anjali</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants responses were lost, n=12.

**Teacher/Child:** Three participants focused on the teacher’s actions and possible motivations before briefly considering Jason’s behavior. This group focused on the teacher’s apparent frustration with Jason and attributed it to the teacher not really knowing what to do. Michael’s interpretation is typical,

Well, there are a couple things happening in the vignette. The teacher seems frustrated with his student, and that frustration could stem from some misunderstandings I think. And then, there is the student and the student having some sort of social issues in class, but those social issues could stem from any number of things.

This group focused on the teacher’s frustration with Jason, attributing it to the teacher’s misunderstanding of the situation and not knowing what to do. They thought that yelling at Jason wouldn’t help anything and resulted from the teacher’s
limited capabilities. Attaching meaning to the teachers’ behavior was accessible because it is very close to some of the participants’ challenges.

When it came to attaching meaning to Jason’s behavior, the participants seemed to struggle with anything beyond a diagnosis of social issues that could come from a wide range of things they didn’t delve into. Beyond this, they had a hard time figuring out what was going on with Jason beyond ‘social issues’. There were many possibilities but weren’t able or perhaps comfortable enough to name any. It seemed that this group had a hard time or perhaps resisted using their ethnotheories to figure out what was going on with Jason and construct a theory of mind for him using their ethnotheories and child development theory to offer hypotheses.

Perhaps this was a moment when they felt the pressure to appear expert without the mastery of expertise. Rather than chancing a wrong answer, they chose not to offer one. This is reminiscent of Liz’s dilemma of what to do when she encounters circumstances that she knows are wrong but doesn’t feel prepared to intervene. The teacher wasn’t able to identify what was happening with Jason in much the same way these participants couldn’t say more than ‘social issues’. Perhaps this group, and perhaps the teacher in the vignette, kept themselves personally removed from Jason’s perspective, not wanting to overwrite Jason’s experience with their own and unsure of how to responsibly use their personal knowledge in appropriate ways to further learning and justice in the situation described in the vignette.
This group’s initial interpretation indicates that they recognize the importance of teachers’ actions in children’s lives, which suggests that they were able to draw on child development theory as content but weren’t able or ready to use their ethnotheories to decenter themselves and hypothesize about Jason’s behavior. This group used their ethnotheories and pedagogical knowledge to discuss the teacher’s behavior and drew on a content-based approach to child development theory to consider Jason’s behavior without making a personal connection using their ethnotheories. It seemed that not using their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory didn’t allow this group to construct a theory of mind for Jason, which seemed to silence them and suggest that they perceived more about Jason than they could name (Piaget, 1968; Polanyi, 1968).

**Child Focused:** Five participants focused on Jason’s behavior alone, offering hypotheses about why he might have behaved in the ways described in the vignette. Unlike the previous group, this group used their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to consider a range of hypotheses about Jason’s behavior. Anjali’s view is typical,

Probably, just from reading this, maybe a child is experiencing some anxiety around a change in schedule, since the student doesn’t seem to scream or hit or push classmates during class sessions, but it tends to happen during transitions. So maybe there is some anxiety around those transitions or the changes in schedule that this child is not able to handle or the child’s not able to control his behavior during those times.

This is an example of how ethnotheories and child development theory can be integrated through student teaching experiences so that child development theory informs and expands the participants’ ethnotheories. According to child development theory, anxiety around change is typical among children in early
childhood. A major challenge for children attending school is the unexpected schedule changes children navigate throughout the day. From their work in the classroom, this group had experienced this behavior and recognized it as familiar when they read the vignette. To them, Jason seemed overwhelmed or anxious. Attributing Jason’s anxiety to a possible schedule change is a common occurrence in an early childhood classroom. Their hypothesis is tied to their ethnotheories from their classroom experiences and child development theory where children develop trust and can relax in predictable, consistent environments (Erikson, 1950). In this way, this group used their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to attach meaning to Jason’s behavior.

Transitions are times when things change, become unpredictable and uncertain. This group hypothesized that Jason’s anxiety might emanate from not knowing what comes next, enacting those anxious emotions with a momentary loss of self-regulation. In an early childhood classroom, the teacher would anticipate this response. However, in a middle childhood classroom, Jason’s behavior would be unexpected and perhaps frustrating for his teacher (Erikson, 1950; Piaget, 1968). Although this group’s hypothesis is plausible and grounded in child development theory, their singular focus on Jason alone, isolated from the sociocultural context of school and home and may create a skewed interpretation. Perhaps this group pushed aside the complexity of the sociocultural context to decenter themselves to attach meaning to Jason’s behavior through the multiple lenses of their ethnotheories and child development theory.
**Child/Teacher:** Two participants focused on the relationship between Jason and his teacher. Different from the other two groups, this group focused on Jason’s relationship with his teacher within the context of the classroom. Jessica’s view is typical,

I think a lot of things could be going on. I think that I know that I struggle with this a lot as a teacher that idea of having to, single out one student by name; one student, and they’re not a bad kid, doing fine otherwise, but maybe just, he likes to chat. He’s used to having the freedom to talk when he’s not in a structured place. For some reason, it doesn’t fit into the classroom environment. And you have to keep making him the bad kid. And maybe nothing is going on.

Similar to the first group, this group acknowledges that a lot could be going on and locating themselves in the teachers’ position. However, this group goes further to consider specific possibilities, locating the ‘problem’ not within Jason but with his teacher’s inability to meet his needs. Jessica continues,

It’s probably OKAY. Maybe he has ADHD. Maybe it could be a lot of things. But I think the teacher probably needs to find different things to deal with the problem she’s having with the student. There could be a one-on-one chat discussion about being line leader or having a role in the back of the line or something like that to make those transitions. It sounds like the transitions are stressing out the teacher more than they’re stressing out the student.

While Jason is probably ‘okay’, the possibility that he may have ADHD, making transitions especially challenging is held open. The emphasis on the likelihood that Jason was ‘okay’ is a pragmatic application of child development theory and the likelihood of there being a problem with Jason’s development. This is an example of a conversation between ethnotheories and child development theory. In this instance, Jessica’s brother has a learning disability, which made his transitions in school especially challenging, similar to Jason. Her hypothesis that Jason is probably ‘okay’ suggests that she isn’t over generalizing her experience but
acknowledges that it is a possibility that based on child development theory it is unlikely that Jason’s behavior is indicative of a disability.

This group wanted to engage Jason in creating the supports he would need to be successful during transitions. Because this group took the complexity of the social/relational dynamic into account, the range of possibilities their hypotheses could address were greater. For example, Jessica’s understanding of what it means to a child to be a ‘bad kid’ stems at least in part from her ethnotheoretical knowledge, growing up with her brother who was seen by some as a ‘bad kid’. Her ability to note the significance of what it means to the child to be the ‘bad kid’ is grounded in a both child development theory and her ethnotheories. This complex weave of ethnotheories and child development theory was indicative of this group’s approach to understanding Jason’s behavior situated in the context of his relationship with his teacher.

In sum, the first group of three participants focused most of their attention on the teacher’s actions with a minimal focus on Jason in a seemingly egocentric approach to the vignette perhaps in keeping with a core concern among professionals in training, ‘getting it right’ (Skovholt, 2004; Elkind, 1987). The second group of five participants focused on Jason alone and their beginning use of child development theory as a mediator of their ethnotheories to decenter their own position, turning their attention away from their concerns about the teacher to understanding the situation through Jason’s eyes. In this way, the second group used child development theory as a method, decentering themselves to construct a theory of mind for Jason’s actions from his perspective.
The third group of two participants used a multifocal approach, examining the vignette situated within the dynamic sociocultural context of the teacher, Jason and the class. In their interpretations this group used their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to construct a theory of mind and to identify possible and plausible developmentally based hypotheses in a complex weave of teacher/student relationships. These initial interpretations constitute a developmental range of applying their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory as a tool to understand Jason’s behavior from the teacher’s perspective in the first group, from Jason’s perspective in the second group and from both Jason’s and his teacher’s perspective in the third group.

The literature argues that teacher education is a weak intervention impeded by novice teachers’ ethnotheories (Feiman-Nemser, 1990). However, the first group was unable to see the situation from Jason’s perspective seemed to be impeded not by using child development theory but because they used child development theory without their ethnotheories, which didn’t allow them to generate a theory of mind for Jason. Overall, the participants’ initial interpretations reflected their value of child development theory and their willingness to use it. The initial interpretations also established a baseline of the participants’ applied knowledge of child development theory and represent the information readily available to them in the classroom as they work with children.

**Revised Vignette Interpretations**

After answering questions about children, child development theory and good teaching, I asked each participant if they wanted a chance to revise their initial
interpretations. Five participants chose to leave their initial interpretations unchanged and five participants chose to revisit and revise their initial interpretations,
Table 5.2 - Revised Vignette Interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher/Child</th>
<th>Child Focused</th>
<th>Child/Teacher</th>
<th>Child in Context</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katalina (NC)</td>
<td>Valerie (NC)</td>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Emily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liz (NC)</td>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Melanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jessica (NC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ron (NC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants responses were lost, n=12. Names with (NC) indicate the participants who did not modify their interpretations.

The five participants who chose to revisit their interpretations, offered longer interpretations that moved toward greater levels of complexity after they answered questions about children, child development theory and good teaching,

Table 5.3 - Shifts in Participants’ Revised Interpretations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From: Teacher/Child To: Child/Teacher</th>
<th>From: Child Focused To: Child/Teacher</th>
<th>From: Child Focused To: Child in Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Participants</td>
<td>1 Participant</td>
<td>2 Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifted 2 Categories</td>
<td>Shifted 1 Category</td>
<td>Shifted 2 Categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael (Charter) Heather (Public)</td>
<td>Anjali (Private)</td>
<td>Emily (Private)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Melanie (Private)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Teacher/Child To Child/Teacher: Two participants shifted their interpretations two categories to focus on Jason in relationship with his teacher. They began by focusing their attention on the teacher’s frustration but weren’t able to generate a theory of mind for Jason’s behavior. In their revised interpretations, they seemed to make a personal connection with Jason using their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory. They talked about Jason as a complex individual with a developing sense of himself informed by those around him. Heather’s response is typical,
I didn’t mention this before but maybe Jason is at a school that isn’t good for him. The academically challenging school and the fact that he has a tutor, may not be a negative thing but I think in an environment where those things are emphasized, sometimes kids can feel a little lost or feel like they don’t measure up, or that they’re only valued for their academic abilities. I don’t think that’s the answer to the problem, ‘cause it seems like he has other issues going on, but I think that might be a part of it, and he may be acting out of feeling that way.

Here Heather begins to look at the situation from Jason’s perspective focusing on the stress a highly academic school can engender and how that can interfere with his being able to do his best. The ‘goodness of fit’ between Jason and his school was something she considered in her initial interpretation but didn’t mention, which indicates that initially she knew more than she felt comfortable naming.

Learning is an inherently stressful endeavor because it focuses on what remains unknown. This is especially challenging in a dominant culture that values knowing over not knowing. As such there is little room for children to rest on the information they have mastered. At the same time there is a tension between the stress of academic rigor and the emotional steadiness necessary to learn new information (Willingham, 2009). While it may seem that stress in school should be avoided, especially for children whose home lives are already stressed, the reality is that learning and stress go hand in hand. This is why it is so important for children to feel cared for, seen, received and supported by their teachers, something that was absent for Jason (Nieto, 2003; Noddings, 1992).

The dynamic interaction among Jason’s inner feelings, school environment and his teacher seem to give rise to his struggle as Heather continues,

Also the teacher needs to figure out why she’s so annoyed with him all the time because usually it’s something inside you that can’t stand something the student does that makes that student’s behavior much more obnoxious to you
than it would anybody else. I mean true his behavior is not really acceptable in any classroom but there’s a reason her frustration level has been reached with him and she doesn’t have more patience.

This group sees two things happening at once and wonders what is happening inside the teacher and why ‘she’s’ so annoyed lifts the full weight of Jason’s behavior from his shoulders to consider the impact of his relationships and environment.

Perhaps Jason is feeling rejected by his teacher. If there is something about Jason that the teacher is sensitive to because of his/her issues, then they can’t see Jason or his struggles clearly and provide appropriate support. Drawing on developmental interaction, this group attends to the issues that both Jason and the teacher bring to their interactions with their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to generate more complex interpretations (Nager & Shapiro, 2000).

Being able to have patience in the face of Jason’s behavior can be linked with the teacher’s capacity to manage his/her own emotions and use child development theory to understand why he might behave that way. Heather continues,

Either she feels like what she’s been doing isn’t good enough or she blames him for not being able to behave, or she feels a lot of pressure based on school, expectations, whatever but she needs to sort that out because he’s in our class and she’s got to deal with him.

This is a more complex interpretation, because it explores several reasons for Jason’s teacher’s response to his behavior. In the process, they included themselves as part of the class working with Jason. Perhaps the structure of the interview provided sufficient scaffolding for this group to restory their views to create connections between the vignette and their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory.
It is in the face of behavior like Jason’s that novice teachers need to be able to find ways to respond rather than react, as the teacher in the vignette seems to have done. One strategy could be to take a moment and consider how the child might be feeling. Doing this requires the conscious use of ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to formulate a theory of mind that requires a personal connection and then attach multiple meanings to the observed behavior.

**From Child Focused To Child/Teacher:** One participant shifted one category from initially focusing on Jason alone to focusing on the dynamic interaction between Jason and his teacher. Initially, Anjali focused on Jason alone. In her revised interpretation, Anjali shifted her focus to examine Jason, his social context and his interaction with his teacher,

There may be something going on at home that may affect his behavior during transitions. So there could be maybe issues of security, maybe, again, feeling the anxiety, but also issues of, like, feeling uncomfortable or feeling comfortable in a large group in a familiar place, but where there’s a teacher to look at or rely on, but maybe not feeling that comfort when you’re standing in line and the teacher is all the way in the front of the line, and maybe he’s all the way in the back.

Although she doesn’t elaborate on it, Anjali does raise the idea of the internalized presence of home as a prominent reference point for Jason. She advances the idea that Jason may not feel secure with the uncertainty during transitions. To gain greater insight, Anjali turns to attachment theory as a way to think about how Jason is experiencing the classroom, positing that perhaps he is physically too far away from the teacher to settle down independently. She hypothesizes that Jason may see his teacher as a source of comfort and reassurance, or secure base (Bowlby, 1988). The idea that teachers hold children emotionally steady so they can take the
intellectual risks learning demands is developmentally grounded (Bowlby, 1988; Piaget, 1968; Maslow, 1943). She continues,

I don’t know if many teachers turn off lights when they’re lining up, so maybe his teacher turns off the lights and maybe Jason doesn’t like that. Maybe Jason doesn’t have a lot of friends in school, and many times during lineups and transitions children gravitate towards their friends so that they can chat. If he doesn’t have any friends or doesn’t get along well with his peers, then maybe that adds to his discomfort.

In this, Anjali uses her student teaching experiences with teachers turning out the lights to wonder aloud about what might disturb Jason. In this, Anjali is constructing contextual information from her experience to develop a theory of mind about how Jason might be feeling in this situation. Taking another view, Anjali advances the notion that perhaps Jason’s uncertainty was exacerbated by not having friends. If Jason doesn’t have friends in the class to chat with as they line up, he may feel frightened and alone especially if he is far away from his teacher. In generating these hypotheses, Anjali draws on a conscious use of her ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to offer ideas on Jason’s theory of mind and how the teacher could provide supports for Jason.

Anjali offers two interpretations that resonate with Jason’s sense of security and comfort. She begins with ethnotheoretical knowledge of a practice she perhaps experienced as a child and observed in her student teaching placement but was unsure of how widespread the practice of turning out the lights is among teachers. Developmentally, turning out the lights during transitions can be scary for children to manage independently (Piaget, 1968; Erikson, 1950). Anjali situates the teacher as a secure base, attributing Jason’s behavior to his possible sense of discomfort,
anxiety or fear of being far away from his teacher, which may cause him distress (Bowlby, 1988).

Anjali sustains her focus on Jason but uses ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to consider how he is experiencing himself within the social context of his relationships with his teacher and classmates. Despite the teacher seeming harsh, Jason may feel very attached to him/her and in need of their physical reassurance. In this, Anjali seems to use insights from her ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to describe ways Jason’s teacher could adapt his/her approach to provide Jason with a greater sense of security and help him develop increased self-regulation during whole group transitions (Elkind, 1987).

In the initial interpretations, Anjali’s interpretation is typical of the child-focused group. In my analysis of that group’s view, I suggested that perhaps they narrowed their focus to look at Jason alone so they could begin to use multiple funds of knowledge to attach meaning to Jason’s behavior. After answering questions about children, child development theory and good teaching, Anjali’s revised interpretation took the broader context of home into account, something that was absent in the initial interpretation.

Considering the influence of home culture and values emerges from her childhood that surfaced in her student teaching experience. Drawing on a combination of ethnotheories mediated by her deepening understanding of child development theory, Anjali began to consider the importance of having a ‘secure base’ near by to steady Jason during transitions. In her revised interpretation, Anjali
used her increasing depth of understanding of child development theory as a mediator of ethnotheories to tailor the theory to apply specifically to Jason.

**From-Child Focused To-Child in Context:** Two participants shifted from focusing on Jason alone to establishing a new category, the child in context, in their revised interpretation. This group examined the interaction between Jason and his teacher and the meaning that interaction might have for Jason and the children in the class who witnessed it. With the added element of the classmates’ varied perceptions, this group’s revised interpretations defined a new, more complex, category in two ways,

1. Emily described the scope of the category in her response; and
2. Melanie applied it directly to the vignette.

Despite their varied approaches, both participants addressed how the teacher set the tone in the classroom for the children to enact, resist and perhaps modify, drawing on the ways the relationships among the children in the class can shape the classroom dynamic (Vygotsky, 1978; Dewey, 1933/2001). Emily’s response defined the scope of this new category,

> I guess one thing I would think about is are there other kids in the class who could be like a buddy for this child or be able to help him. So, thinking about how kids interact socially or set each other off or can help each other; probably being attuned to that. My first way that I would respond is still to talk to the child. So, I don’t think I would change that.

In her initial interpretation, Emily said she would talk with Jason. In her revised interpretation, Emily still wanted to talk with Jason and then find a child with whom he’s connected to help him maintain his composure during transitions. She examines the importance of attending to the relationships among children to create scaffolds of support for large group transitions.
Choosing a buddy for Jason where the pairing would be beneficial to both children emerges from the zone of proximal development – a theory Emily found useful from her child development class (Vygotsky, 1978). In this, Emily constructs the teacher’s role as a facilitator to increase children’s capacities to regulate themselves and each other, another approach grounded in child development theory, which can develop adaptive expertise to support an authoritative pedagogy (Bransford, Derry, Berliner & Hammerness, 2005; Baumrind, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1968; Erikson, 1950).

Melanie describes an example of attending to gender identity development in her revised interpretation, situating Jason in the complex social context among his peers,

He’s not sure where he fits in among the boys. So there’s a group of boys who are the bad boys and they act out. I think he’s really trying to gain some kind of entry into that group by being a little fresh or being a little silly. Yeah. I’m trying to think how – one thing has been great is when I take him out to work with him, he’s kind of like the boss and he gets to pick who comes with him. So he’s been kind of using that power really. That’s actually, I think, been really good for him, giving him a little bit of control. He can kind of create his own entry into the group by taking this kid with him and impressing him with whatever it is that we do.

Melanie begins with a very concrete assessment that Jason isn’t sure where he fits among the boys in his class. She draws on her ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to explore the complicated social context of Jason’s class through the prism of gender identity development. To help him become more secure in a social location he chooses, Melanie suggests that Jason needs guided opportunities to exercise his power, control and authority in constructive ways. She continues,
If a teacher wanted to take me out of the room in like elementary school, I would have hated that. Kids are just dying for the chance to come out of the room and hang out in the hallway and play games and do different things. I think it’s probably social pressures. They’re huge. I almost think sometimes that school isn’t really about teaching things. It’s really about getting some social graces and social skills and social awareness and self-regulation.

Explicitly using her own early school experiences and growing up with brothers, Melanie’s ethnotheories mediated by child development theory shape her revised interpretations of the vignette.

As the mother of a son and sister with brothers, Melanie knows that males and females see and are seen by the world differently. Using this ethnotheoretical understanding, she draws on child development theory to hypothesize that Jason’s social struggle may be linked with issues of power and academic struggles. For her, the social dimension of the classroom sets the stage for academic success. Melanie suggests that demystifying his tutoring by bringing a buddy along could create a more positive social location for Jason that could in turn strengthen his academic status, allowing Jason to experiment with holding a little power and control on his own with guidance and support. Her interpretation began with her ethnotheoretical understanding of gender identity as a sister and mother that she then examined through the lens of child development theory. In this way, child development theory served as a mediator of Melanie’s ethnotheories to examine the complicated terrain of social relationships among boys to promote learning and justice.

In this new category, Emily and Melanie conceptualize the teacher’s role as adaptive with teachers being listeners, observers, facilitators and guides, helping children succeed by using the sociocultural context of the classroom as a vehicle to promote the acceptance and support necessary for children to take risks for
sustained academic success (Willingham, 2009; Bransford, Derry, Berliner & Hammerness, 2005; Harvey, 1999).

Overall, each of the five participants who revised their initial interpretations shifted toward increased complexity in their interpretations after answering a series of questions about children, child development theory and good teaching. The five participants who revised their vignette interpretations drew on their ethnotheories as consciously applied resources to help them construct the social context of Jason’s classroom that had been purposely silent in the vignette itself. They consciously used their ethnotheories as resources to construct Jason’s perspective, to flesh out the contextual silences in the vignette. Then, participants used child development theory as a mediator of their ethnotheories to attach developmentally grounded meanings to the situation described in the vignette.

This purposeful use of ethnotheories mediated by child development theory was new. I found that the participants’ initial interpretations revealed that ethnotheories played an important role in helping them establish a personal connection with Jason to generate a theory of mind for his actions. In their revised interpretations, the participants consciously used their ethnotheories to construct a plausible context to more fully understand the situation from both Jason’s and his teacher’s perspective. The shift between the initial and revised vignette interpretations suggests the role guided reflection can have in encouraging novice teachers to consciously use their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory as a tool to understand children’s behavior and hopefully shaping their classroom practice.
Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I examined the participants’ initial and revised vignette interpretations. Asking the participants to interpret the same vignette before and after answering a series of questions about children, child development theory and good teaching constituted a pre/post design that positioned the interview questions as a purposeful intervention (Creswell & Plano-Silva, 2007). The purpose of this was to see if novice teachers might construct new understandings about child development theory that might shift their perception of a child’s behavior. I found that five of the ten participants shifted their initial interpretations to include greater complexity and attention to the social interaction context of the vignette narrative.

The participants’ initial interpretations made varied use of their ethnotheories and child development theory. For example, the first group didn’t use ethnotheories to make a personal connection with Jason to help construct a theory of mind for Jason. In addition, this group wasn’t able to decenter their own perspective enough to consider Jason’s. Decentering is an essential element of applying child development as a method of understanding the world through children’s eyes and to constructing a theory of mind.

In the revised vignette interpretations, the participants consciously used their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to develop a plausible or likely context that enabled the five participants who revised their initial interpretations to generate a more complex and layered interpretation as outlined below,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.4 - Participants Categorical Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[10*]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chart Names</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initial Vignette Interpretation</td>
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<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/Child (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Focused (5)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Revisited Vignette Interpretation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/Child (1)</td>
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<td>Child Focused (2)</td>
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<td>Child/Teacher (5)</td>
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<td>Child in Context (2)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Shifts in Vignette Interpretation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/Child to Child/Teacher (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Focused to Child/Teacher (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Focused to Child in Context (2)</td>
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*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants’ responses were lost, n=12.

It was surprising that the first group didn’t seem to use their ethnotheories and diagnosed Jason as having a problem with social issues. Based on the findings from my earlier pilot study, I expected the initial vignette interpretation would be grounded solely in the participants’ ethnotheories and their revised interpretations would be grounded in their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory.

However, the participants’ ethnotheories were a point of entry to construct a theory of mind for Jason’s behavior. Among the five participants who chose to revise their initial interpretations, I found that they offered longer, more complex interpretations in which they used their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory, which constituted a shift in how the participants used their ethnotheories. In the initial interpretations, ethnotheories served as points of entry to figure out how Jason might feel. In the revised interpretations, the participants used their ethnotheories to individualize and personalize the generalized theories of child development to reveal the layered complexity of the dynamic among Jason, his teacher and classmates.

My analysis was guided by the following research sub-questions,

1. How might novice teachers interpret their students’ behavior?
2. What funds of knowledge do they use to make these interpretations?

**How Might Novice Teachers Interpret Their Students’ Behavior?**

In constructing the vignette interpretation component of the interview protocol, I wanted to learn how the participants might attach meaning to children's behavior. I used the vignette, depicting a familiar situation with purposeful silences as a tool to hopefully elicit the way the participants attached meaning to Jason’s behavior. Specifically, I wanted to explore how the participants might use child development theory and their ethnotheories to figure out what might be going on with Jason, his teacher and classmates. The participants interpreted the vignette in the following ways,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher/Child</th>
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<th>Child/Teacher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants’ responses were lost, n=12.

I found that the first group didn’t use their ethnotheories to attach meaning to Jason’s behavior rather they seemed to diagnose Jason with ‘social issues.’ The second and third groups used their ethnotheories as a point of entry, making a personal connection with Jason to construct his theory of mind and then use child development theory to hypothesize about what Jason’s behavior might mean.

After answering a series of interview questions about children, child development and good teaching, five participants chose to revise their initial vignette interpretations,

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Teacher/Child</th>
<th>Child Focused</th>
<th>Child/Teacher</th>
<th>Child in Context</th>
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</table>
Initially, the participants’ ethnotheories served a pragmatic purpose to help the participants choose likely interpretations among a myriad of developmentally plausible interpretations. In this way, the revised interpretations repositioned child development theory as a meditator of the participants’ ethnotheories to make connections between the particular complexities of the vignette and the generalized theories of child development.

The participants’ initial and revised interpretations indicate that ethnotheories may help them use child development theory to understand individual children’s behavior. Among the five participants who revisited and revised their initial vignette interpretations, I found that they used their ethnotheories in more explicit ways to construct contextual information purposely silent in the vignette to help them construct Jason’s theory of mind, grounded in child development theory. These participants used their ethnotheories to make a personal connection with Jason and his teacher as a point of entry to constructing their theory of mind based on the vignette narrative. In this way, the participants used their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory as an interpretive lens to attach meaning to Jason’s behavior as described in the vignette.

What Funds of Knowledge Do They Use to Make These Interpretations?

In framing this research sub-question, I thought there would be a clear delineation among the funds of knowledge the participants used to interpret the vignette. However, I found that there wasn’t. The participants understanding of what they know and learned in their teacher preparation program changed over the
course of the interview. When the five participants revised their interpretations they used their own experiences mediated by their shared knowledge of child development theory.

I thought the funds of knowledge would change from ethnotheories to child development theory if they revised their initial interpretations. What changed was how the participants used ethnotheories and child development theory, which enabled them to deepen their hypotheses. The participants moved away from using ethnotheories as a point of entry in the initial vignette interpretations using ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to construct absent contextual information to support a more complex interpretation of the vignette narrative in their revised interpretations. Specifically, the participants used their ethnotheories in two ways in their initial interpretations,

1. The first group, Teacher/Child, didn’t use their ethnotheories to hypothesize about Jason’s perspective and diagnosed him with ‘social issues’; and
2. The second and third groups, Child Focused and Child/Teacher, used their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to understand what Jason might be feeling.

The first group of participants used their ethnotheories to understand what might be going on for Jason’s teacher and used child development theory alone to figure out what might be going on for Jason. It was surprising to find that using child development theory without the personal connection through ethnotheories. This group had little to say about Jason’s behavior other than offering a diagnosis of problems with social issues.

The second and third groups used their ethnotheories as a point of entry to make a personal connection with Jason in an effort to understand Jason’s
perspective through his eyes. In taking this approach, the participants were able to use their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to decenter themselves and focus on Jason. These initial interpretations focused on Jason, and/or his teacher. It was only the third group that considered the relationship between Jason and his teacher as part of their hypotheses.

The five participants who chose to revise their vignette interpretations used their ethnotheories to create a personalized connection with Jason to construct a theory of mind, for Jason, his teachers and classmates. Since they began to construct a layered narrative, the revised vignette interpretations were longer, more complex weave of the participants’ ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to construct the missing contextualized information in the vignette to generate an interpretation of the vignette situated within the complex social dynamic of the classroom. Based on their realizations from the revised interpretations, the participants described how they might adjust their practice to meet Jason’s particular needs while protecting his social standing among his peers.

Emblematic of their novice status, the participants had difficulty putting all the pieces together in the initial vignette interpretations. In keeping with the idea that with support, people can perform ‘head and shoulders’ above what they can manage on their own (Vygotsky, 1978), five participants revised their interpretations toward greater complexity. In these revised interpretations, the participants used their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory, blurring the boundaries between theory and practice, enabling them to construct new understandings of the
same vignette without prematurely defining what may or may not have been going on with Jason in the context of his classroom.

These findings suggest that the participants’ ethnotheories mediated by child development theory helped them attach meaning to Jason’s behavior within the complex social dynamic of the classroom in the revised vignette interpretations. The shift in the vignette interpretations suggests the important role guided reflection can have in encouraging novice teachers to use their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory as a tool to understand children’s behavior and perhaps shaping their pedagogical choices. These findings have implications for both research and practice, which is the focus of the next and last chapter.
Chapter 6

Findings and Implications

…in the end it was the teacher who applied the principles, put the theories into practice, verified the findings by her own experience. The teacher in her classroom was the scientist in the laboratory and the artist in the studio, rolled into one, and supreme in her own sphere.

Caroline Pratt

Overview

This chapter focuses on the findings and implications of this small, qualitative research study examined the following research question,

How does child development theory mediate classroom practice toward increasing learning and justice across diverse educational contexts?

I interviewed 12 participants working in public, private and charter schools. Due to technical difficulties, I analyzed 10 complete interviews to generate the findings in this study.

I found that the participants’ conscious use of their ethnotheories informed by child development theory functioned as co-mediators of classroom practice toward increasing learning and justice across varied student teaching placements. When I began this study, I thought ethnotheories were impediments to novice teachers using child development theory to understand children’s behavior. The participants’ vignette interpretations indicate that ethnotheories may help them use child development theory to understand individual children’s behavior. For example, in
his initial interpretation Michael offered a decontextualized diagnosis of what might be going on,

Well, there are a couple things happening in the vignette. The teacher seems frustrated with his student, and that frustration could stem from some misunderstandings I think. And then, there is the student and the student having some sort of social issues in class, but those social issues could stem from any number of things.

He thinks that social issues are at the core of Jason's struggle without context or insight on the situation from Jason's perspective. In the revised vignette interpretation, a more ethnotheoretically grounded, developmental interpretation emerged,

If a teacher wanted to take me out of the room in like elementary school, I would have hated that. Kids are just dying for the chance to come out of the room and hang out in the hallway and play games and do different things. I think it's probably social pressures. They're huge. I almost think sometimes that school isn't really about teaching things. It's really about getting some social graces and social skills and social awareness and self-regulation.

Both participants thought that social issues were the main issue in the vignette. In the revised interpretation, Melanie brings her own early experience into her interpretation and then talked about the importance of the social domain. In this revised interpretation, we learn what Melanie thinks about Jason and why. In the initial interpretation, Michael only shares what he is thinking but without situating in within a context.

These findings have implications for teacher education practice and future research to further illuminate the complex weave of novice teachers' beliefs and classroom practice. It would be important for teacher educators to view novice teachers' ethnotheories as resources to which professional funds of knowledge can be linked to hopefully recast teacher preparation as a transformative process,
enabling novice teachers to learn how to develop adaptive expertise supporting innovative and effective teaching approaches grounded in child development theory. More research needs to be conducted to more clearly understand the shifting role of ethnotheories in the trajectory of preparing novice teachers for diverse educational contexts.

**Methods**

The lessons from my earlier pilot study and literature review provided guidance for framing my research questions and sub-questions,

How does child development theory mediate classroom practice toward increasing learning and justice across diverse educational contexts?

What are novice teachers’ beliefs about their students?  
What are novice teachers’ beliefs about child development?  
How might novice teachers’ field placements influence their beliefs about the usefulness of child development theory?  
What are novice teachers’ beliefs about good teaching?  
How might novice teachers interpret their students’ behavior?  
What funds of knowledge do they use to make these interpretations?  
What are novice teachers’ beliefs about the usefulness of child development theories in understanding their students’ behavior in diverse school placements?

These research questions and my literature review guided the development of my interview protocol (Appendix A), supporting consistent data collection across participants (Weiss, 1995; Seidman, 1991).

I chose a cross-disciplinary approach to my literature review to provide support for a layered approach to data analysis. Specifically, I examined economic development and human development to discover the role hope to motivate people to persevere in the face of hardship. The desire for a better life rests on the hope that against all odds it is possible. Oppression removes the hope for a better life by
silencing possibilities (Appadurai, 2004; Sen, 1999). In this study, I explored the role schools play in the process of creating and/or curtailing children’s opportunities to dream, hope and aspire.

An examination of the literature on schools, schooling and good teaching revealed that few children from low-income families of color attend schools where their dreams, hopes and aspirations are fed and supported (Schwebel, 2004; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003; Bowles & Gintis, 1976/2011). The societal belief that all public schools are the repository of national hopes, dreams and aspirations has been not translated into practice, repositioning schools for children of color and children from low-income families as institutions of civilized oppression by silencing children’s questions and experiences in the name of compelled compliance (Fabricant & Fine, 2012; Schwebel, 2004; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003; Harvey, 1999; Anyon, 1997; Bowles & Gintis, 1976/2011).

Based on this literature review and an earlier pilot study, I theorized that child development theory could serve as a tool to help novice teachers preserve their students’ individuality and help them remain open to children’s questions and voices, which increased learning and justice in the classroom. I interviewed each of the 12 participants once, using the same interview protocol. I asked the participants to interpret the same vignette followed by a series of questions about children, child development theory and good teaching. I offered each participant the opportunity to revisit and revise their initial vignette interpretations.

The interview protocol also guided the beginnings of data analysis. After transcribing each interview in its entirety, I used the interview protocol to break down
the data by question across participants to begin to identify possible patterns and convergences in the participants' responses. I organized the participants’ responses by interview question reading for patterns and to see how/if their responses addressed my research question and sub-questions. I created a series of analytic charts to maintain the tension between the depth of detail from each participant and the breadth of responses across participants.

A more detailed discussion of the findings and implications is organized into the following sections,

**Findings**
- Novice Teachers’ Beliefs about Children and Child Development Theory
- The Role of the Student Teaching Placement
- Novice Teachers’ Beliefs about Good Teaching
- How Novice Teachers Interpret Children’s Behavior

**Implications**
- Teacher Education Practice
- Future Research

**Findings**

In talking about good teaching, the participants examined the intersection of policy and practice, which raised issues of educational equity and justice in their classrooms. The participants then seemed to apply those understandings to their revisited and revised vignette interpretations. At first, most of the participants decentered their position to imagine how Jason and/or his teacher might feel in the situation described in the vignette, the participants used their ethnotheories as a way to construct a ‘theory of mind’ for Jason, his teacher and classmates. In their revisited and revised interpretations, five participants used their ethnotheories
mediated by child development theory to connect with the people and circumstances described in the vignette.

**Novice Teachers’ Beliefs about Children and Child Development**

The notion that childhood is a time of innocence requiring protection from the harsh realities of adult life is a widely held belief (Filipovic, 1995; Postman, 1994; Aries, 1965). The participants in this study came from varied backgrounds, life experiences and academic preparation. I found that all the participants viewed children as academically capable and valued child development theory for their graduate coursework and classroom practice,
Despite their varied life experiences, academic backgrounds and student teaching placements, the participants spoke in one voice. This unanimity suggests that these views are grounded in their shared funds of professional knowledge, like child development theory.

**Beliefs about Children**: All the participants viewed children as academically capable and believed child development theory was a valuable fund of knowledge for their graduate coursework and classroom practice. The participants viewed children in two ways,

**Table 6.2 - Beliefs about Children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Children</th>
<th>Children as Complex Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eight participants viewed children as three types, seeming to use them to manage the tremendous complexity and uncertainty of the classroom. The desire to reduce
the complexity of working with at least 25 unique, complex individual children can feel like an impossible task. If they are able to discern patterns of behavior and find effective strategies to intervene and stop the undesirable behavior quickly, then they can address these behavior patterns consistently in the same way without necessarily understanding what motivated their behavior, which leads to developing routine expertise. The problem with using tacit ethnotheories alone, supporting routine expertise is that novice teachers can supplant children’s reality with their own, unwittingly silencing and isolating children in the classroom (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Harvey, 1999).

The four participants who viewed children as unique, complex individuals were excited by the challenge of working in the complex, ever-changing social system of the classroom. This group’s curiosity was peaked when children behaved in unexpected ways. In these moments, they used child development theory as a mediator of their ethnotheories to figure out what might be motivating children’s behavior to create teaching approaches they adapted to meet children’s needs. This approach supports developing adaptive expertise, enabling them to become adept at noticing patterns of behavior and intervening to change the behavior by understanding what gave rise to it in the first place (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

The eight participants who sorted children into types, based on children’s affective, non-cognitive aspects of learning, viewed them through a singular lens (Ingersoll, 2004). Four participants, taking a decentered and developmentally based
perspective, viewed children as complex individuals, embodying a unique constellation of strengths and struggles at times. Despite their differences, both groups assumed children came to school academically capable with wide variation in their social-emotional capacities to immediately and independently engage in the academic work of the classroom. All the participants faced the challenge of navigating their students’ social-emotional issues that might facilitate or impede children’s capacity to learn and succeed academically. The first group chose an efficiency-oriented approach to manage their students’ complexity and develop routine expertise. The second group chose a decentered, innovative approach to addressing their students’ individual needs indicative of developing adaptive expertise (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

**Beliefs about Child Development:** Child development theory is an important fund of professional knowledge, enabling teachers to understand children’s behavior through the child’s eyes (Horowitz, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Child development theory can help novice teachers realize that children know far more than they can name and that their behavior provides important clues about their internal landscape (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman, 2010; Polanyi, 1968). The participants’ conceptions of children and their working definitions of child development theory provided a window on their beliefs about child development,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>Continuum</th>
<th>Understanding Children From the Inside Out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Table 6.3 - Conceptions of Children and Definitions of Child Development**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th></th>
<th>3</th>
<th></th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather-P</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Michael-C</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>Ron-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily-R</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Katalina-C</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>Valerie-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz-R</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Jessica-P</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>Anjali-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie-R</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants’ responses to this question were lost, n=12. P=Public School; R=Private School; C=Charter School.*

Four participants defined child development as growth, worked mostly in private schools and viewed children as types. Three participants defined child development as growth along a continuum, viewed children as individuals and worked in publicly funded schools, two in charter schools and one in public school. Finally, three participants defined child development as understanding children from the inside out all worked in private schools and viewed children as types. Additionally, it suggests that teacher preparation programs can be strong interventions in novice teachers’ professional development when their life experiences are received as resources to individualize the generalized knowledge of child development theory.

The second group, defined child development as growth along a continuum also shared their beliefs about children being individuals. Perhaps the participants working in charter and public schools had students who embodied a wide range of cultural experiences, making it easy to see children as unique individuals. Similarly, the participants in the last group worked in private schools with children who tend to share class based life experiences and values across cultural lines, making it difficult to discern differences among children (Lareau, 2003). At the same time, the last group defined child development as understanding children from the inside out, which is a theoretically grounded perspective.
Perhaps the wide range of children’s life experiences and circumstances that the participants working in public and charter schools encountered enabled the second group to see children as unique, complex individuals. Similarly, the participants who defined child development theory as understanding children from the inside out had their student teaching placements in private school. Perhaps there is a narrower range of life experiences and circumstances among the children in private school that may have been more familiar to the participants, allowing them to notice patterns of behavior among similarly situated children. This finding might be an opening for teacher educators to explicitly increase novice teachers’ cultural knowledge base along with greater exposure to and understanding of the full range of children’s life experiences and circumstances in all school settings.

**The Role of the Student Teaching Placement**

As in other professions, the clinical experience provides novices with opportunities to apply newly learned professional knowledge and skills with real people in typically occurring circumstances. It is a rich learning experience that places pressure on novice professionals to appear expert without actually having the expertise the role demands (Skovholt, 2004). In teacher preparation programs, the student teaching placement is the clinical experience during which novice teachers can construct their own individualized approach to teaching under the supervision of classroom teachers and teacher educator mentors.

Although examining the role of the student teaching experience is a research study in itself, in this study I am looking at the possible role of the student teaching placement in relation to the participants’ beliefs about children, child development
theory and child development theory in-use. I found that the student teaching placement didn’t define the participants’ understandings as I expected. However, I did find that the student teaching placement was important to the participants because it provided a space in which they could enact and test out the efficacy of their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory.

Clear-cut patterns of responses linked with student teaching placements didn’t emerge. There were indications and insights that suggested an interplay among the participants’ ethnotheories, child development theory and their student teaching placements,
Table 6.4 - Definitions of Child Development, Child Development Theories In-Use, Beliefs about Children and Student Teaching Placements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>Continuum</th>
<th>Understanding Children From the Inside Out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather-P/F</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Michael-C/S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily-R/S</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>KatalinaC/F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz-R/F</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Jessica-P/F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie-R/F</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Anjali-R/F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants’ responses to this question were lost, n=12. P=Public School; R=Private School; C=Charter School. F=Child Development as a Frame of Reference; S=Child Development as Specific Theories.

All but one of the participants with student teaching placements in public and charter schools believed children were unique, complex individuals. Perhaps the cultural diversity and varied life experiences among the children in these settings highlighted the importance of seeing each child as an individual because each child actually had very different life experiences and home cultures. Similarly, five of the six participants who worked in private schools viewed children as types and defined child development theory in two different ways. Perhaps this convergence of responses suggests that the sense of shared values and culture typical in private schools might mute the cultural and racial differences among the children (Lareau, 2003).

Neither the way participants used child development theory in the classroom nor their student teaching placements appeared to influence their willingness to revisit and revise their vignette interpretations evidenced by the variation in both groups,
### Table 6.5 - Student Teaching Placements and Child Development Theories In-Use and Participants’ Interpretive Shifts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>No Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Theory In-Use</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Theory In-Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Katalina</td>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>Frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Frame</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Frame</td>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Frame</td>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Frame</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants responses were lost, n=12.

This configuration of responses suggests that the participants’ willingness to revisit and revise their vignette interpretations wasn’t linked to their student teaching placements or child development theory in-use. Perhaps learners of all ages are open to new information and flexible in their thinking when they encounter experiences that reveal the need for new information, challenging them to create new approaches to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of the children they teach guided by their beliefs about good teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Ziv & Frye, 2004; Nieto, 2003; Noddings, 1992; Lortie, 1975).

Most of the participants used child development theory as a frame of reference to attach meaning to children’s behavior. Despite this convergence, there was variation among the participants in the ways they applied it, evidenced by the participants’ varied descriptions of the limits of child development theory,
Table 6.6 - The Limits of Child Development Theory, Child Development Theory In-Use and Student Teaching Placements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>So Much to Know</th>
<th>Hard to Discern</th>
<th>Too Constrained</th>
<th>A Way Inside</th>
<th>No Limits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie (R/S)</td>
<td>Heather (P/F)</td>
<td>Michael (C/S)</td>
<td>Emily (R/S)</td>
<td>Katalina (C/F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjali (R/F)</td>
<td>Jessica (P/F)</td>
<td>Melanie (R/F)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron (R/F)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Liz (R/F)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants’ responses were lost, n=12.
P=Public School; R/Private School; C=Charter School. S=Child Development Theory In-Use as Specific Theories; F=Child Development Theory In-Use as a Frame of Reference.

The variation among the participants’ responses suggests that the student teaching placement may serve as an integrative experience where they begin to construct their own, individual approach to teaching actual children that is grounded in the participants’ ethnotheories mediated by child development theory. Perhaps they found child development hard to discern from the many sociocultural influences that might shape a child’s development because the children they worked with had a great deal going on outside the classroom that the participants didn’t anticipate or fully understand (Vygotsky, 1978).

Again, the participants’ concerns about becoming teachers is reflected in the breadth of their concerns,
Table 6.7 - Concerns about Becoming Teachers, Student Teaching Placements and Child Development Theory In-Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constrained Practice</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Policy Based</th>
<th>Unprepared</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heather (P/F)
Jessica (P/F)
Ron (R/F)
Melanie (R/F)
Valerie (R/S)
Anjali (R/F)
Emily (R/S)
Liz (R/F)
Katalina (C/F)
Michael (C/S)

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants responses were lost, n=12. P=Public School; R/Private School; C=Charter School. S=Child Development Theory In-Use as Specific Theories; F=Child Development Theory In-Use as a Frame of Reference.

This configuration of responses suggests the participants’ concerns were grounded in their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory as well as their student teaching placement experiences. In the first two categories, the participants’ responses converged around their concerns about teaching, child development theory in use and student teaching placement location.

The two participants, who were concerned that child development theory would constrain their practice, worked in public schools and defined child development as a frame of reference. For these participants, their students’ development was shaped by many context-based factors, like poverty, hunger, absent parents and homelessness. Although they valued child development theory to help them understand children’s behavior, they also viewed child development theory as a decontextualized theoretical frame that constrained their practice because their students’ sociocultural context was so fraught and didn't seem to be addressed in the theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1968).
The two participants unsure about the wisdom of their choice to become teachers because of the personal sacrifices it required, worried about leaving the well-resourced realm of private school to work in public school because they didn’t want to be forced to teach children using methods not grounded in child development theory. The two participants who had policy-based concerns worried about the institutionalized inequities in public schools was in stark contrast to the abundantly resourced private schools. They were conflicted about working in private schools when the needs in public schools were so great but they felt they didn’t have sufficient expertise to be effective teachers in public schools.

Three participants were concerned that they felt unprepared to successfully meet their students’ needs. While they found their teacher preparation program useful, they also felt it wasn’t enough to prepare them for the range of challenges they might encounter in the classroom. This worry was shared by participants with placements in private and charter schools. This group’s concerns highlighted the risk of sending novice teachers into the classroom without adequate supports to meet children’s needs. For example, one participant described a moment when she saw an incident that she knew was wrong but didn’t know how to intervene and walked away. This left the students to find their own way without adult guidance and support. Turning a blind eye to children in need can teach children that the rules don’t apply equally to all, leaving some children feeling isolated and unsafe. In walking away, the teacher enacted civilized oppression by tacitly endorsing inappropriate behavior of some students directed towards others.
These concerns about their efforts to address inequitable education policies by teaching in public schools were tempered by their realization that as novice teachers they weren’t ready to navigate the challenges posed by many of the children’s life experiences attending public schools along with the policies governing public schools.

Examining the role of the student teaching placement indicated that the student teaching placement is an important opportunity for novice teachers to make their newly acquired professional knowledge uniquely their own. This indicates that each novice teacher actively constructs their individual understanding about children, child development theory and good teaching within the context of the school. While the experience of student teaching is critically important, the learning is constructed within the novice teacher in relation to their school-based colleagues and teacher education mentors rather than being housed within the particular school.

**Novice Teachers’ Beliefs about Good Teaching**

One of the goals of clinical student teaching placement experiences is to move novice teachers ever closer to becoming good teachers. However, there isn’t a clear definition of what good teaching. The literature on good teaching shows that there are three main components,

Novice teachers’ knowledge of academic content
Novice teachers’ knowledge of children and child development theory
Generally accepted pedagogical practices (Nieto, 2003; Palmer, 1999)
As a result, each of the participants had an opportunity to consider the meaning of good teaching at the policy and classroom levels. Neither of these views seemed to be influenced by the location of their student teaching placement.

There was some clarity among the participants with student teaching placements in public and charter schools that being a highly qualified teacher is not the same as being a good teacher. Only one participant working in a private school shared this view,

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Table 6.8 - Highly Qualified Teachers v. Good Teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>(10*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not the Same</td>
<td>The Same</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael (C/S)</td>
<td>Anjali (R/F)</td>
<td>Valerie (R/S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katalina (C/F)</td>
<td>Emily (R/S)</td>
<td>Ron (R/F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather (P/F)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Melanie (R/F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica (P/F)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz (R/F)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants responses were lost, n=12. P=Public School; R=Private School; C=Charter School. S=Child Development Theory In-Use as Specific Theories; F=Child Development Theory In-Use as a Frame of Reference.

Varied cultural backgrounds and life experiences highlight the limits of education reform policies that use a one-size fits all approach to certifying teachers to work in diverse settings. Adaptive expertise, characteristic of good teaching, is needed in all settings but particularly in schools serving children from diverse families to avoid the use of routine expertise where children’s approaches to learning need to match or be supplanted by the teachers’ approach (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

The participants’ beliefs about children shifted as they answered questions about good teaching. When the participants defined good teaching, each of the
three definitions rested on the belief that children are unique, complex individuals. However, earlier in the interview eight of the participants viewed children as types. After answering questions about children and child development theory, I found that as they answered questions about good teaching six participants shifted their view from seeing children as types to seeing them as complex individuals. These views about children are developmentally grounded and can support the development of adaptive expertise (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Another aspect of their definitions of good teaching required making a connection with each child and understanding each child’s perspective. To accomplish this, good teachers need to locate each child within their individual sociocultural context. As such, the ways teacher educators address their own and novice teachers’ ethnotheories, or don’t, models important lessons about the value of learners’ experiential knowledge. For example, if teacher educators don’t value novice teachers’ ethnotheoretical knowledge in teacher preparation, they unintentionally model routine expertise, the practice of teaching without regard to children’s individuality or culture in the classroom, inviting novice teachers to not use of child development theory in the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Since beliefs guide thinking and ethnotheories guide practice, it seems important for novice teachers to develop adaptive expertise by using child development theory as a mediator of their ethnotheories so that they can adapt their teaching to address the individual children’s needs in their classrooms (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Cuban, 1993).
The participants’ willingness to shift their thinking is striking, which illustrates the possibility for intervention by their teacher education mentors in teacher preparation programs. I found that the participants talked pointedly about equity and justice in their classrooms when they situated their beliefs about children and child development within the broader context of education policy for good teaching. As they considered the education policy requiring a highly qualified teacher in every classroom, all the participants began to see children as complex individuals whose lives inside schools are shaped by structures and policies that may challenge children’s access to a high quality education, which would curtail their ability succeed academically no matter how hard a child works or how smart a child is because of a lack of funding, teacher quality and ongoing professional development.

In light of the disconnect between education policy and classroom practice, the participants defined good teaching in three ways,

**Table 6.9 - Definitions of Good Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reach Each Child</th>
<th>Engages</th>
<th>Adjusts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jessica (P/F)</td>
<td>Michael (C/S)</td>
<td>Liz (R/F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjali (R/F)</td>
<td>Katalina (C/F)</td>
<td>Valerie (R/S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily (R/S)</td>
<td>Ron (R/F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heather (P/F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melanie (R/F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants’ responses were lost, n=12. P=Public School; R=Private School; C=Charter School. S=Child Development Theory In-Use as Specific Theories; F=Child Development Theory In-Use as a Frame of Reference.

All of these definitions of good teaching rested on the need to connect with children.

Eight of the participants defined good teaching in terms of connecting with children.

Two participants defined good teaching as adjusting their teaching practices to meet
their students’ needs. These definitions acknowledge children’s individuality and the need to connect the learner with the material, which can lead participants to develop adaptive expertise (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). All of these responses rested on the participants’ conceptions of children as complex individuals. This shift from seeing children as types and complex individuals to seeing all children as complex individuals after answering questions about child development theory indicates the importance of guided reflections for novice teachers to become conscious of what they think and the implications they have for classroom practice.

**Novice Teachers’ Vignette Interpretations**

I asked each participant to interpret the same vignette twice as a way to see if and how their interpretations might change after answering questions about children, child development theory and good teaching. I found that over the course of the interview, the participants’ perceptions of children shifted toward using child development theory as a mediator of their ethnotheories as they shifted from naming Jason’s ‘problem’ to raising questions about why he might be struggling with transitions. Before answering any questions, the participants interpreted the vignette and their initial interpretations fell into three categories of responses,
Table 6.10 - Initial Vignette Interpretations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher/Child</th>
<th>Child Focused</th>
<th>Child/Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather (P/F)</td>
<td>Valerie (R/S)</td>
<td>Jessica (P/F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael (C/S)</td>
<td>Emily (R/S)</td>
<td>Ron (R/F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katalina (C/F)</td>
<td>Liz (R/F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melanie (R/F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anjali (R/F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants responses were lost, n=12. P=Public School; R=Private School; C=Charter School. S=Child Development Theory In-Use as Specific Theories; F=Child Development Theory In-Use as a Frame of Reference.

This configuration of responses suggests that the participants in the first group focused heavily on the teacher’s role and offered a brief diagnosis of Jason’s behavior, saying he had a problem with social issues. They were able to restory the events in the vignette to understand how the teacher might be feeling and what they might be thinking because they had been in this position themselves in varied circumstances (Kenyon & Randall, 1997). This group didn’t seem able to make a similar personal connection with Jason using their ethnotheories, instead relying on child development theory alone, distilled of culture, to offer a diagnosis rather than an interpretation.

The participants in the other two groups used their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to examine the possible meanings of Jason’s behavior alone or in relation to his teacher. The five participants who focused on Jason alone considered how the environment of the classroom might affect him along with the contentious relationship with his teacher. The thread they focused on was Jason’s behavior might make sense to him, which is a developmentally grounded approach. This group used their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to attach
meaning to Jason’s behavior without attending to the context within which it took place. They offered ideas about what Jason might have been feeling based on their student teaching placement experiences because they faced children who behaved similarly. In this way, the participants used their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to attach meaning to the events described in the vignette.

The two participants who examined Jason’s behavior in relation to his teacher used their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory as a tool to understand Jason’s and his teacher’s view of the situation. These participants constructed a narrative about the context within which both Jason and his teacher were interacting that was not described in the vignette.

The participants who chose to revisit and revise their initial interpretations shifted their interpretations toward greater complexity by using their ethnotheories mediated by child development as a tool to understand Jason’s behavior situated within the context of his relationship with his teacher and classmates.

Five of the ten participants chose to revisit and revise their initial vignette interpretations,
Table 6.11 - Revised Vignette Interpretations, Student Teaching Placements and Child Development Theory In-Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher/Child</th>
<th>Child Focused</th>
<th>Child/Teacher</th>
<th>Child in Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katalina (C/F) Valerie (R/S) Liz (R/F)</td>
<td>Michael (C/S) Heather (P/F) Anjali (R/F) Jessica (P/F) Ron (R/F)</td>
<td>Emily (R/S) Melanie (R/F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Due to technical difficulties, 2 participants responses were lost, n=12. Names in **bold** indicate the participants who revised their interpretations. P=Public School; R=Private School; C=Charter School. S=Child Development Theory In-Use as Specific Theories; F=Child Development Theory In-Use as a Frame of Reference.

Five participants chose to leave their initial interpretations unchanged. This indicates that while they may have shifted their views about children, perhaps it wasn’t enough for them to revise their initial interpretations. The five participants who revised their interpretations, did so after answering questions about children, child development theory and good teaching,

Table 6.12 - Shifts in Five Participants’ Revised Interpretations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From: Teacher/Child To: Child/Teacher</th>
<th>From: Child Focused To: Child/Teacher</th>
<th>From: Child Focused To: Child in Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Participants</td>
<td>1 Participant</td>
<td>2 Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifted 2 Categories</td>
<td>Shifted 1 Category</td>
<td>Shifted 2 Categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael (C/S) Heather (P/F)</td>
<td>Anjali (R/F)</td>
<td>Emily (R/S) Melanie (R/F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P=Public School; R=Private School; C=Charter School. S=Child Development Theory In-Use as Specific Theories; F=Child Development Theory In-Use as a Frame of Reference.

In each instance, these five participants revised their initial interpretations toward increasingly decentered positions, using their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to attend to Jason’s perspective situated within the social context of his classroom relationships.
Four of the five participants shifted their interpretations across two categories, taking the context and relationships with peers into greater account, which was not present in their initial interpretations. One participant moved from focusing on Jason’s perspective alone to considering Jason’s and his teacher’s perspectives using her ethnotheories mediated by child development theory. The third group’s revised interpretations constituted a new category of interpretive responses where they explicitly talked about the role of Jason’s peers as witnesses and potential sources of support. The two participants in the last group revised their interpretations by constructing a theory of mind for Jason’s classmates.

In sum, over the course of the interview, I found that in the initial interpretation some of the participants didn’t use their ethnotheories and struggled to understand Jason’s behavior using child development theory alone. Most of the participants used their ethnotheories as a point of entry to begin to consider how Jason might be feeling. After answering questions about children, child development theory and good teaching, five participants chose to revise their vignette interpretations, reinterpreting the vignette narrative from both Jason’s and his teacher’s perspective.

I found that the participants used their ethnotheories as a way to make connections between Jason’s behavior and child development theory. In the initial vignette interpretations, the participants either didn’t use their ethnotheories or used them sparingly as a point of entry to explore Jason’s perspective. Among the five participants who revised their initial vignette interpretations, I found that they used their ethnotheories in more explicit ways to construct contextual information purposely silent in the vignette to help them generate ideas about Jason’s theory of
mind grounded in child development theory. In this way, the participants’ ethnotheories were mediated by child development theory to understand what might have given rise to Jason’s behavior. These findings suggest that teacher preparation programs can be strong interventions in novice teachers’ professional development when their ethnotheories are viewed as resources to individualize the generalized knowledge of child development theory.

**Finding Summary:** Teacher preparation programs can be weak interventions when ethnotheories are perceived as barriers to professional knowledge by teacher educators and are clung to by novice teachers leading to little or no change in ethnotheories (Feiman-Nemser, 1990). At first, I thought ethnotheories were an impediment to novice teachers’ using child development theory, viewing ethnotheories and child development theory as separate. In my interviews with the participants, I further thought I would hear the ways in which the participants used child development theory to shape their conceptions of children and the stories they told themselves about their students’ behaviors (Cardwell, 2002). However, I learned that the participants in this study held on to their ethnotheories as the repository of their life experiences and worldviews that are organized, reorganized and integrated with new experiences and new knowledge.

As the participants constructed their beliefs about good teaching in policy and practice, they began to talk about educational equity and justice in their classrooms and how important seeing the whole child is to promoting an equitable learning environment. Attending to each child’s humanity by attending to their individual learning needs serves as a protective factor against the silencing, isolation and
social exclusion of civilized oppression that can come when teachers think about children as undifferentiated types (Harvey, 1999).

**Implications for Teacher Education Practice**

I found that ethnotheories enabled the participants to use child development theory to attach meaning to the behavior described in the vignette. The participants held on to their ethnotheories and allowed them to be informed and expanded by new knowledge like child development theory. In this way, the participants’ ethnotheories were mediated by child development theory to provide greater insights on children’s behavior, which would in turn inform their pedagogical choices. The participants were able to shift from not using their ethnotheories consciously and purposefully to making use of them after answering questions about children, child development theory and good teaching.

This finding suggests that teacher educators need to explicitly and consistently encourage novice teachers to use their ethnotheories as resources to inform and individualize child development theory through frequent guided reflections where novice teachers can restory their ethnotheories to incorporate professional funds of knowledge like child development theory (Kenyon & Randall, 1997). This would encourage novice teachers to create adaptive teaching approaches to meet individual children’s needs children, minimizing children’s experiences of feeling silenced and socially excluded from the critical and ongoing social exchanges that support and sustain academic achievement (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Kahn & Kammerman, 2001; Harvey, 1999).
The participants’ desire to become good teachers and be fully prepared for the wide range of situations they might encounter in the classroom was stronger than their desire to ‘get it right’. As such, the participants were willing to change their thinking and construct new information through guided reflections, similar to the experience of the interview. No matter how well prepared novice teachers are at the end of their teacher preparation programs, they can’t be ready for every situation. However, through sustained and frequent opportunities to engage in guided reflections about the intersection of their coursework and classroom practice, novice teachers can construct the necessary principles, understandings and concepts that can guide their pedagogical choices grounded in each participant’s ethnotheories mediated by child development theory.

I propose several, specific changes in teacher education practice that could move toward this outcome,

Child Development Theory Taught as Both Theory and Method
Frequent Opportunities for Novice Teachers to Reflect on Theory, Policy and Practice
Expand Novice Teachers’ Cultural Competencies Beyond the Ethnotheories
**Child Development Taught as Both Theory and Method**

Child development is a required course of study in most teacher preparation programs and it is often taught with an emphasis on the theoretical content of child development theory, which positions it as set without being adaptable to actual children (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Walkerdine, 1993). When child development theory is taught distilled of context and culture, novice teachers find it difficult to bridge the gap between this generalized theory and the individual children they work with. However, teaching child development as both theoretical content and as a method to understand individual children’s behavior, repositions it as a useful, permeable tool for understanding children’s behavior because it leaves space for novice teachers to apply their ethnotheories in purposeful ways.

This approach would provide important scaffolding, making child development theory more ‘user friendly’ for novice teachers working in classrooms but it doesn’t seem to be widely used in teacher preparation programs. I would further recommend that teacher educators provide ample opportunities to enable novice teachers to ask the questions that emanate from their own experiences with children so that they can construct connections between novice teachers’ ethnotheories and child development theory.

One way to do this would be to use a case study approach to class discussions and written assignments so that novice teachers gain greater insight through experience on how to use child development theory as a mediator of children’s behavior. When case studies are used to guide classroom discussions, novice teachers gain greater insight on the wide range of life experiences among
their classmates that can expand their own ethnotheories to include the perspectives of their classmates when learning to generate hypotheses about children’s behavior. The usefulness of this practice-based intervention could be examined by the following research question,

How did novice teachers shift their perceptions of children’s behavior and adjust their teaching approaches after taking this child development course?

**Frequent Opportunities for Novice Teachers to Reflect on Theory, Policy and Practice**

I found that when the participants in this study considered the education policy context within which they worked, they began to talk about the structured inequities of funding and varied policies that can lock children into academic underachievement that has nothing to do with children’s intellectual capacities. Similar to the student teaching placement experience, guided reflections and integrative discussions provide explicit opportunities for novice teachers to construct and reconstruct their individual connections among education theory, policy and practice, moving them closer to becoming good teachers working with diverse students across varied educational contexts. It is important to include the education policy context so that novice teachers have an opportunity to interrogate dominant cultural beliefs and structured inequities that otherwise might be viewed as individual challenges or shortcomings.

Many of the participants in this study said they chose to participate because they would have a chance to reflect with me on all they had learned and experienced but hadn’t had the chance to process it and attach meaning. The significance of reflection as a tool for adult can’t be overstated (Kegan, 1982). Five participants
shifted their understanding of Jason’s behavior after answering questions about children, child development theory and good teaching. This indicates the importance of using discussion with thought provoking questions as a scaffold for novice teachers to discover, uncover, construct, reconstruct and interrogate their ethnotheories in relation to their newly acquired professional knowledge like child development theory.

Guided reflections can also provide novice teachers with models they can use in the classroom to develop adaptive expertise that can support innovative teaching approaches grounded in their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory to meet children’s varied social, emotional and academic needs. These guided discussions can help novice teachers feel more prepared to face the myriad of uncertainties they will encounter because they will have developed enough conceptual knowledge to adapt their practices to support their students so they don’t walk away when confronted with an unfamiliar situation they may not have been specifically prepared to address.

**Expand Novice Teachers’ Cultural Competencies Beyond their Ethnotheories**

One of the things that emerged in my findings is the need for novice teachers to become more aware of their own assumptions, beliefs and cultural biases so that they don’t miss important moments of conflict for their students that may not be a part of their own experiences. I found that most of the participants who worked in public and charter schools, who identified themselves as white, viewed their students, most of whom were children of color from varied cultural backgrounds, as individuals. Viewing children in this way with complex and layered identities, meant
they needed to reach out and learn more about who the child is an individual so that they could meet the child where they are and effectively and meaningfully engage them in the challenges of academic work.

As the participants described children as individuals, they also drew on a deeper understanding of themselves as embodied cultural people, viewing children through a similar lens. Being able to do this is important but novice teachers vary widely in their ability to do this evidence by eight participants viewed children as types at the beginning of the study. However, I further found that as the participants answered questions about good teaching their view of children shifted from seeing them as types to seeing them as individuals. To provide more support for novice teachers to view children as individuals, teacher educators can provide courses and assignments that would support novice teachers to productively and consistently examine their ethnotheories with the goal of transforming them from tacit knowledge into consciously used resources mediated by child development theory to provide insights on individual children’s behavior. This practice-based intervention provides an opportunity to use the research findings to inform practice and perhaps policy. Specifically, I would investigate the following research question,

How do novice teacher use their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory as resources to understand the world through each child’s eyes, adjust their teaching approaches to create academically rigorous, culturally respectful learning environments explicitly situated within the layered sociocultural contexts of each child’s life experiences?

Expanding novice teachers’ cultural competencies is a critical element of being an effective teacher capable of adaptive teaching practices in multiple educational contexts working with diverse populations of students. Being able to
see the world from a wide range of perspectives can enable novice teachers to promote increased learning and justice in the classroom by preventing and interrupting incidences of social exclusion and civilized oppression that can get in the way of children doing their best academic work.

**Implications for Future Research**

The findings from this study also have implications for future research. Given the limitations due to the sample size in this study, it would be illuminating to construct a mixed methods study with a larger, representative sample of novice teachers, teacher educators, experienced teachers who serve as in-class student teaching mentors and school building administrators using a pre/post design similar to this study with vignette interpretations and interview questions.

The use of mixed method studies, with larger, representative samples, would facilitate greater understanding identifying significant factors in the complex and layered weave of novice teachers’ teacher preparation experiences. It would be important to understand how novice teachers experience their student teaching placements and the guidance they receive in those placements from the principals, cooperating teachers and teacher education mentors. Possible areas of focus for future research are,

- Ethnotheories Mediated by Child Development Theory
- Role of the Student Teaching Experience
- Possible Cultural Shift in Teaching

**Ethnotheories Mediated by Child Development Theory**

Ethnotheories mediated by child development theory shapes novice teachers’ understanding of children’s behavior and in turn can influence their classroom
practice. Adaptive expertise tends to position ethnotheories as resources while routine expertise tends to position them as barriers to good teaching,

**Table 6.13 – Types of Teaching Expertise**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Routine Expertise</th>
<th>Adaptive Expertise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assimilate Information</td>
<td>Accommodate Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnotheories as biases</td>
<td>Ethnotheories as resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethnotheories mediated by child development theory enable novice teachers to link their beliefs about children grounded in child development theory with their pedagogical choices, adjusting their approaches to maximize children’s learning. In this way, ethnotheories mediated by child development theory can help novice teachers’ restory their beliefs about children’s behavior and perhaps influence classroom practice (Kenyon & Randall, 1997; Cuban, 1993).

Individuating classroom practice is at the heart of innovative practices, developing adaptive expertise and good teaching (Branford & Darling-Hammond, 2005; Nieto, 2003). In this study, I found that the participants were active co-constructors of the professional knowledge they learn in their courses and student teaching placements. I then wondered if this was a perspective shared more broadly among novice teachers. Given what is known about learners’ actively co-constructing knowledge, novice teachers may have tremendous say in what they learn, who they learn it from and how they learn it. More needs to be understood about this possibility as well as a possible link with novice teachers’ student teaching placement experience.

**Role of the Student Teaching Placement Experience**
Based on the findings in my earlier pilot study, I anticipated that the participants’ views about children and teaching would be heavily influenced by their student teaching experience (Cardwell, 2005). I further thought that the participants working in public school would question the usefulness of child development theory while the participants working in private schools would believe child development theory is useful. However, in this study, I found that all the participants, regardless of their student teaching placement believed that child development theory was useful in their graduate studies and their classroom practice.

I also thought that the student teaching placement experience might compete with the teacher education coursework. In this competition, I thought that the influence of the student teaching placement would be strongest. As such, I didn’t interrogate it as thoroughly as I might have if I didn’t hold this view. With these assumptions, I unintentionally cast novice teachers as passive, uncritical recipients of information.

As I analyzed the participants’ responses in this study, I found that their student teaching experiences were important integrative experiences and the participants were critical, active co-constructors of what they learned and from whom they learned their lessons. The student teaching experience seemed important in helping the participants construct their identity as a teacher and translating that vision into concrete classroom practices shaped the participants’ ethnotheories mediated by child development theory. The participants’ beliefs about good teaching seemed to play a pivotal role in deciding whose advice to listen to and whose advice to ignore. I believe it would be helpful to gain greater insight through research to learn more
about novice teachers’ internal conversation between their ‘teacher in the head’ and child development theory to strengthen the link between theory and practice in their student teaching placement.

It would be helpful to learn more about how novice teachers view their student teaching experience, what they learned and what, if anything could strengthen it. It would be valuable to learn more about the complex relationships among the many potentially significant factors that support novice teachers’ use of child development theory as both theory and method in the classroom,

What is the role and significance of the student teaching placement for novice teachers, cooperating teachers and teacher educators?

This would hopefully provide greater insights from varied perspectives on the role and significance of student teaching. These insights could strengthen teacher preparation programs as interventions to improve novice teachers to become good teachers capable of sustaining children’s healthy development and academic success in just learning environments.

**Possible Cultural Shift**

The landscape of society, education and teaching has changed dramatically over the past 50 years. When teaching was framed primarily as a ‘calling,’ the spirit of volunteerism could flourish and the teacher who gave the most, sacrificed the most for their children was seen as the best. The long hours, hard work, and teacher-supplied materials were a part of this informal expectation because after all who could deny a child? However, in the current, corporatized climate teaching has been repositioned as a job that requires ongoing training, no tenure or employment stability (Fabricant & Fine, 2012; Ravitch, 2010). Given this context, the participants
have a reasonable expectation of being paid for the work they do, the risks they take and that there will be enough supplies and supports provided by the employer to perform the work expected within the scheduled time frame of the school day.

As such, this would be a ripe moment to re-examine what keeps teachers in the classroom; why people choose to become teachers and why they stay or leave (Lortie, 1975). When the participants reflected on their concerns about becoming teachers, I wondered if their responses might signify the beginning of a major shift in the culture and expectations among teachers. Traditionally, ideal teachers were selfless, never expressing needs of their own, willing to sacrifice their own well being for the benefit of their students. However, in the wake of the move toward corporatizing education and the recent economic downturn, I wonder if the participants’ express needs for more money, ongoing professional development and expectation of a middle class life is particular to this group or more widespread. If this concern is broadly held, it signals that the past decade of education reform toward the corporatization of education has perhaps created an unintended consequence - increasing the expectations and demand of teachers to be compensated for the hours required to do the work expected of them and to have all the materials necessary to enable them to meet their students’ increasingly complex learning needs.

**Discussion**

It is the unpredictability of life in the classroom that worries parents and teachers alike and novice teachers in particular. The participants in this study are in the process of understanding and embracing the unpredictability of their students’
behavior using their ethnotheories mediated by child development theory as guides. Lacking adaptive expertise, novice teachers worry about being prepared to face unknown and unknowable challenges. Understanding themselves, their families, their life experiences and their expanding professional knowledge through the prism of child development theory as both theory and method allowed the participants in this study to recognize its usefulness and limitations in the classroom.

The findings from this study suggest teacher educators need to reconsider and re-conceptualize their approaches to teaching child development theory. Specifically, moving away from a theory dominant approach to an approach that frames child development as both theory to learn and a method to use when observing children’s behavior. This would support novice teachers’ ability to preserve every child’s individual complexity, modify lessons to meet every child’s individual learning needs and interests. It would also enable novice teachers to establish a just learning environment by attaching multiple meanings to children’s behavior, considering the sociocultural context within which it takes place thereby valuing every child’s individuality in the classroom. This could pave the way for novice teachers to construct a sufficient depth of understanding and quickly develop adaptive expertise, a cornerstone of good teaching (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Nieto, 2003; Piaget, 1968).

In this study, I was surprised by how little it took for these participants to access greater depth of knowledge and understanding about what might be going on in the vignette, which made me think about how teaching and learning are recognized in schools and classrooms. For many, teaching looks like telling and
learning looks like listening. However, it seems that both teaching and learning at their best are practiced in the context of relationships and enacted through guided, purposeful conversations.

There is evidence in this study to suggest that novice teachers’ ethnotheories can serve as resources and bridges to facilitate novice teachers’ use of child development theory to generate multiple, contextualized interpretations of children’s behavior that guides their classroom practice. The key to attaching meaning to experiences in teacher preparation courses and in student teaching placements is positioning novice teachers’ ethnotheories as resources. Typically, their ethnotheories are viewed as impediments to learning and using child development theory offered by teacher preparation courses and student teaching placements (Feiman-Nemser, 1990).

However, I found that ethnotheories can be powerful allies in helping the participants use child development theory and develop adaptive expertise. When teacher educators take novice teachers’ ethnotheories seriously and engage in frequent guided reflections, teacher educators can perhaps make novice teachers’ ethnotheories explicit, which can enlist novice teachers’ cooperation and willingness to shift their beliefs in light of new information as they increase their understanding of child development theory and culturally based knowledge. In this way, ethnotheories move from being tacit impediments to conscious resources novice teachers can use to tailor the generalized child development theory for each individual child in their classroom.
For example, during a recent meeting, a student shared an ‘aha’ moment he had while working with his 2nd grade students in a very strict charter school where teaching is anchored in routine expertise and defined as telling and learning is seen as listening. As part of a rare school-wide community building exercise, he asked his students what they thought about when they weren’t listening to him. The children said they worried about their homes, their families, and parents who were blind, dying or incarcerated. The children’s responses made him realize the magnitude of the unspoken emotional burden his students carried into the classroom every day. As a result, he said, “it makes it hard for me to yell at them when they don’t listen because now I know why.”

It’s hard to yell at someone when you have an idea of how they will experience it situated within the context of their lives. It was easier for this teacher to yell at his students when all he had to rely on were his own perceptions grounded in his ethnotheories alone. But when he heard directly from the children, he learned a great deal about their daily life struggles, which were outside his personal experience and didn’t occur to him before. Once he asked the question and uncovered the children’s humanity through their individual stories he was able to turn away from his assumptions. As a result, he was able to connect with his students with compassion and establish a caring, more equitable classroom environment that valued children’s insights and experiences that supported learning.

This example illustrates that the teacher really didn’t know what his students were thinking about when they didn’t listen to him. Without that information, this teacher would harshly scold the children for not paying attention to him because they
weren’t interested in him or his lesson or bored, interpretations grounded in his ethnotheories. He assumed their childhood experience was carefree and innocent. He didn’t consider that what might have been on his students’ minds or how their life circumstances could affect their engagement.

When his teacher education mentor suggested he ask his students why they weren’t paying attention, the teacher shifted from seeing his students as people in need of being controlled to seeing them as people in need of his understanding and support. Knowing what the children were thinking helped this novice teacher see his students more clearly as individuals because he used his ethnotheories to consider their personal struggles mediated by his knowledge of child development theory to consider the implications these struggles have for their ability to engage in the academic work he taught.

In light of what he learned, he began to modify his lessons to make them personally relevant to each individual child. For example, he modified an assignment to make mothers’ day cards so that the child whose mother is blind could make a tactile card her mother could enjoy, thereby making the activity meaningful to that particular child (Anonymous, Personal Communication April 20, 2011). This shift away from one-size fits all approach to teaching individual children was an approach grounded in child development theory.

He shifted from teaching a group of children to working with a classroom of individual children with unique worries and concerns. He realized that engaging his students in conversations was an important social and pedagogical tool. By engaging children in conversation to surface their experiences, he opened the door
for each child to become an individual, thereby more human in his eyes and in one
another’s eyes. Seeing his students as individuals, shifted his teaching approach to
a more equitable, just and humane, tailored to meet individual children’s needs.

This practice-based illustration is an example of how expanded cultural
knowledge and the conscious use of ethnotheories mediated by child development
theory can shift novice teachers’ practice toward increased learning and justice, a
goal of this study. Using child development theory as a vehicle for novice teachers
to interrogate their ‘teacher in the head’, children’s behavior and classroom practice
opens a third space of exploration without the burden of intentionality and shame for
the teacher (Lortie, 1975).

There are many teachers who can create a welcoming classroom culture
without using child development theory that doesn’t silence children but they have a
hard time saying why their classroom works when novice teachers, parents and
administrators ask. Having the space of child development theory that constructs
children as unique, complex individuals allows teachers to examine their practices
and themselves to locate the mechanisms of isolation, silencing and exclusion. This
doesn’t have to be a solitary process – engaging children in conversations about
what would help them feel safe enough to speak is a practice that can interrupt the
subtle silencing of children’s voices that can go unnoticed.

Realizing that children have their own thoughts, feelings and worries that can
enrich and enhance children’s learning allows teachers to begin to ask themselves
questions about why rather than perhaps feeling threatened because their students
aren’t listening to them. For some novice teachers, it may trigger a fear that they
aren’t interesting, are unprepared and bad at teaching. It is in this space that child development theory can be very helpful. This is the narcissism of the learner at work where the novice teacher is worried about how they are doing rather than what the children are thinking. Child development theory can help redirect novice teachers’ attention away from themselves and their fears on to the children’s needs and fears.

Equipped with a deep understanding of child development theory as a mediator of ethnotheories, novice teachers can interrogate their own practice and adjust their pedagogy to meet their students’ academic and social needs, preparing children across race, class and gender lines for economic independence. It also prepares children to be active citizens with the ability to make informed choices in the voting booth necessary to sustain a shared social life where they greet diversity with interest and respect. The link between child development theory and active participation in a democratic society is the teacher as a human meditational tool of culture, society and learning informed and guided by child development theory (Dewey, 1933/2001).

In conclusion, learning to be a good teacher isn’t a magical, hidden process or a mystical calling. It is an internal process that is expressed in classroom practice anchored in deep understandings of how children learn and develop. The findings in this study suggest that the primary focus of teacher education programs needs to be on creating frequent opportunities for novice teachers to reflect on their experiences in various sized groups and individually with their teacher education mentors.
because they are active co-constructors of the professional knowledge they learn and use in the varied classrooms in which they work.

Child development theory is a core element of professional teaching knowledge, providing principles of practice that all teachers use in individualized, unique ways as mediators of their ethnotheories. As such, ethnotheories are a key element of adaptive expertise necessary for good teaching. Silencing ethnotheories in teacher education programs can encourage routine expertise because no matter who the students are or what they need, these teachers can only use the same teaching approach for every child. This is the inequity of sameness as fairness education policies in the classroom. Using the same teaching approach, anchored in routine expertise, with complex individual children yields stratified academic outcomes that replicate the stratifications in the larger society. Varied teaching approaches, grounded in adaptive expertise, that meet individual children’s needs yield outcomes that vary according to children’s academic capacities. The challenge with education policies focused on testing and sameness as fairness approaches is they disregard child development theory, subordinating children’s learning, individuality and humanity for education training, compliance and test scores.

By consciously using the full range of their ethnotheoretical knowledge mediated by child development theory, novice teachers can begin to develop a theory of mind to understand and address the complexities of how each child learns. In this way, novice teachers can begin to construct adaptive expertise by adjusting their approaches and academic content to elicit children’s questions and meet their needs, leading to increased learning and justice in the classroom.
Appendix A

Interview Protocol

I. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I would like to begin by asking you to share your thoughts about the following vignette:

At the end of the day, Jason's teacher confided to a colleague, "I just can't call his name one more time." Jason attends an academically challenging school. Like a number of his classmates, he has a tutor but isn't in any serious academic trouble. In one-on-one interactions, he is charming and funny. During large group transitions or class line-ups, there are times when he screams, hits, or pushes his classmates.

What do you think might be going on here?
What might be some of the long-term and short-term consequences for Jason's behavior?

As the teacher being confided in, what advice might you offer Jason's teacher?

Probe: Have you had any experiences like this?
If yes, could you tell a little more about the situation?
Are there any other suggestions you might have?

II. I would like to start with a few questions about your educational experiences and how you came into teaching:

What was your major in college?

Probe: If not an education major: Did you take any education courses prior to attending River College?

Have you taught before?
If yes: Where did you teach and for how long?
   How did you come to teach there?
   What teaching certification do you hold? (then to the next question)
If no: How did you become interested in teaching?
   What prompted you to become a teacher?
   What drew you to attend River College?
   What are some of your hopes and concerns about teaching?
   Despite your concerns, what motivates you to remain in teaching?

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about your course work at River College:
   ♦ When did you take a child development course as part of your teacher preparation course work?
   ♦ What do you remember from your child development course?
   ♦ How would you define child development?
Have you found this information useful in other teacher preparation courses?

Now that you have been teaching in the classroom, did you find that what you learned in child development was useful?

- If yes: What was useful and how has it been useful?
- If no: Why do you think it hasn’t been useful?

In your experience, what were some limitations of the child development theories you learned in your coursework?

What do you wish you had learned more about in child development?

How would you define child development theory?

Next, I would like to ask you some questions about your work in the classroom:

- Has there been a time when you were teaching and something from child development theory came to mind?
  - If yes: Would you describe what it was?
  - Were there other times? (then to next question below)
  - If no: What kinds of things come to mind when you are teaching?
  - What helps you make sense of your students’ behavior?

What does child development theory help you know about your students? Can you think of an example?

What does child development help you learn about yourself? Can you think of an example?

Is there anyone you talk to about your students? (Why/why not?)

Who do you talk to about your students?
  - Is there anyone you talk to at your school? (Why do you think this is the case?)

I would like to ask you some questions about your views on teaching and children, I was wondering how you would describe an ideal child, an average child, and a child difficult to deal with in your class.

How would you describe good teaching?

- Do you remember having good teachers?
  - If yes: What were they like?
    - What was it that made them good teachers in your view?
  - What is important for good teachers to know?
  - Can you recall moments when you have engaged in good teaching?
III. I would like to return to the vignette and ask you if there is anything you would like to add or change about your earlier interpretation in light of our interview:

Vignette:
At the end of the day, Jason's teacher confided to a colleague, "I just can't call his name one more time." Jason attends an academically challenging school. Like a number of his classmates, he has a tutor but isn't in any serious academic trouble. In one-on-one interactions, he is charming and funny. During large group transitions or class line-ups, there are times when he screams, hits, or pushes his classmates.

In light of our conversation so far, is there anything you would like to add or change in your initial interpretation of this vignette?

IV. In this next set of questions, I will ask you what you think about child development, your school placement and your colleagues’ views about teaching and child development:

Do you think teachers need to know child development theory to work effectively with their students?  
Yes  No  Why?/Why not?

How useful do you think child development is in understanding children’s behavior?
Extremely  Somewhat  Not Very  Not at all
Useful  Useful  Useful  Useful

How would you describe the quality of your school?  (why do you say that?)

Based on your experiences in the school, what are the school’s priorities?  (why? Any examples?)

What kind of lives do you imagine your students will have?  (Why do you think this?)

Do you feel safe in your school?  (why/why not?)

Do you believe the children in your school feel safe?  (why/why not?)

Do you think children’s individual needs are seen and attended to by the adults in your school?  (Why do think this is the case?)

Do you believe that teachers in your school shape your views about children?  
Yes  No  What makes you say that?
Do you believe your colleagues think child development is useful when trying to understand children’s behavior?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Extremely Useful</th>
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<th>Not Very Useful</th>
<th>Not at all Useful</th>
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Why do you think this?

Do you think that the teachers with less than 5 years of teaching experience believe that child development theories are useful in understanding their students’ behavior?

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<th>Not Very Useful</th>
<th>Not at all Useful</th>
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What are some examples of the typical things that they might say? Why do you think they feel this way?

Do your colleagues with 5 or more years of experience believe that child development theories are useful in understanding their students' behavior?

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<th>Somewhat Useful</th>
<th>Not Very Useful</th>
<th>Not at all Useful</th>
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</table>

What are some examples of the typical things that they might say? Why do you think they feel this way?

Do you think that the principal or director of your school thinks child development is useful in understanding students’ behavior?

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<th>Somewhat Useful</th>
<th>Not Very Useful</th>
<th>Not at all Useful</th>
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</table>

Why do you think this?

Does the principal or director of your school talk about child development? (Circle one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

If yes, what do they say? If no, why do you think they don’t talk about it?

Based on your experiences in this placement, how do you think the teachers in your school would describe good teaching?

Again, based on your experiences in your placement, how do you think the principal or director in your school would describe good teaching?
Is there a difference between a good teacher and a ‘highly qualified’ teacher? If so, how do you see them?

V. In the final section of the interview, I would like to ask you some questions about how you describe yourself.

How would you describe your racial and ethnic identity?

How would you describe your family’s socio-economic status as you were growing up?

How would you describe your socio-economic status now?

How would you describe your professional identity?

Are there other ways that you would describe yourself that I haven’t included?

Please choose a pseudonym with a first and last name that will be used in the write up of this research:

Is there anything you would like to add that you didn’t have a chance to say?

Are there questions you feel I should have asked, but didn’t, to better understand your views about the usefulness of child development theory in your classroom?

Now that we are finishing, what advice would you give me about designing a child development course for beginning teachers?
## Participants' Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>College Major</th>
<th>Ed Courses</th>
<th>Prior Teaching</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
<th>Graduate Program (1)</th>
<th>Social Class As a Child</th>
<th>Social Class Now</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Professional Identity</th>
<th>Other Important Descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heather Smith</td>
<td>Psychology Neuroscience</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Toddler Center, Undergraduate</td>
<td>TFA/EC Public</td>
<td>Lower Middle when young then upper middle</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Reynolds</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Peace Corps – South Africa</td>
<td>Assistant EC/Ch Pub/Charter</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>Middle Class/Lower middle class</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Working on it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katalina Miller</td>
<td>Developmental Psych</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Taught 2s in preschool</td>
<td>TFA/Gen/Sped Pub/Charter</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>Middle Class? Bi-racial/Multiracial(2)</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Weiss</td>
<td>Political Science Theater, Ed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Taught since high school</td>
<td>Museum Ed Public</td>
<td>Poor to Middle Class</td>
<td>Subsistence White, Jewish, Israeli</td>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>Immigrant, Advocate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Johnson</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Career changer – journalism</td>
<td>Assistant EC/Private</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Mixed/Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>White, Jewish (3)</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Artistic, athletic energetic hopeful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amaya Martinez</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TFA/EC Public</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>See p. 7 – see things as they really are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia Green</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Urban Semester - undergraduate</td>
<td>Assistant EC/Private</td>
<td>Upper middle class</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>My parents are Jewish</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie Fiskin</td>
<td>Theater Arts</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Tutored/Taught, volunteer non-profit</td>
<td>Assistant EC/Ch – Private</td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Brown</td>
<td>Studio Art</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Career Changer – artist</td>
<td>Non-Matric Private</td>
<td>Middle Class (not upper)</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>White, Caucasian</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Artist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz Knight</td>
<td>Environmental Science/ Public Policy</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Taught after undergraduate</td>
<td>Assistant Childhood Private</td>
<td>Upper Class</td>
<td>Lower middle Class/Soc: Upper class</td>
<td>Caucasian American</td>
<td>Well respected young teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie Carter</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Taught, Career Changer</td>
<td>Infant/Toddler</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Hand to mouth /super in debt</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjali Shah</td>
<td>Computer Science + Economics</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Tutored, Career changer-always loved children.</td>
<td>Assistant EC/ Private</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>Indian American (4)</td>
<td>Changing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1-- EC = Early Childhood; Ch = Childhood; TFA = Teach for America
2 – African-American, Caucasian, Native American (Cherokee)
3 – I’m white, I’m Jewish. My father’s Jewish, Eastern European background and my mother was Southern Baptist. Intellectual, that’s my culture, my ethnicity.
4 – Indian-American or South Asian Indian – American, first generation. I think I’m considered first generation. I’m the first in my family to be born in this country. My parents are from India.
The Play Years: Case Interpretation Paper

In 4 pages, write about one of the cases below. As you consider what might be going on, be sure to describe the important developmental achievements of early childhood and why you think these are important. Then address how the child embodies and/or challenges what we typically expect based on developmental theory. In light of the developmental theory, hypothesize about what you think might be going on for the child in the case of your choice and how each child might be experiencing the world. Frame your responses within the context of the developmental interaction approach (Shapiro & Nager, 1999). As part of your discussion, explicitly consider the ways in which children’s developmental experiences are shaped by their intersecting identities of race, class, gender, culture and ability/disability.

**Case #1** After working in the blocks for a short time, Jonathan walked over to his teacher and said, “I don’t want Ruth to come back here anymore,” turned and went back to working with his small group in the block area. Ruth is a three-year-old classmate who sustained a severe injury to her leg and is wheelchair bound. Earlier in the week, Ruth’s mother came to the class and discussed the injury and recovery process in graphic detail, which served to upset everyone.

How does Jonathan’s statement make sense and why?
How might Ruth experience this classroom and why?
What developmental strengths and concerns do you have for Ruth and Jonathan?

**Case #2** Carrie wailed, “I hate coming to school!” Her mother concerned, immediately spoke with the principal about why her 5 year old ‘hates’ school. Meanwhile, Carrie breezes through the morning entry routine and navigates her way to the meeting area where she describes her exciting weekend. She then offers one of the books she bought that weekend to the class to a chorus of ooo’s and ah, ahs as her mother and the principal entered the room. As was her habit, Carrie orchestrated the transition from meeting to breakfast with a casual wave and ‘hi, mom.’

Why does Carrie’s declaration make sense and why?
How does Carrie seem to experience the classroom?
What is she learning?
What developmental strengths and concerns do you have for Carrie?
The School Years: Case Interpretation Paper

In 3 to 4 pages, write about one of the cases below. As you consider what might be going on, be sure to describe the important developmental achievements of middle childhood and why you think these are important. Then address how the child in the case embodies and/or challenges what we might typically expect from them based on developmental theory. In light of the developmental theory, hypothesize about what you think might be going on for the child in the case of your choice and how each child might be seeing and experiencing the world. Frame your responses within the context of the developmental interaction approach (Shapiro & Nager, 1999). As part of your discussion, explicitly consider the ways in which children’s developmental experiences are shaped by their intersecting identities of race, class, gender, culture and ability/disability.

Required Format for Papers - 1" margins; double-spacing; and 12-point typeface; your name at the top of each page; page numbers at the bottom. Please use APA citation style and be sure to include a bibliography listing all the sources you reference in your papers and staple your pages together. Be sure to submit a hard copy of your paper.

Case #1) Bettina (9) is an excellent student and has been becoming increasingly angry and anxious in school. Bettina had been the youngest for many years. When she turned 8, she thought she was ready for everyone to stop calling her “the baby of the bunch.” Then she found out her mother was pregnant. At first, she was so excited because she thought that when Tiffany came home she would get the chance to show everyone how grown up she was by being helpful. When Tiffany came home, things didn’t work out the way she expected. Despite all her effort, her parents didn’t seem to notice. They were worried about Tiffany all the time because she wasn’t talking at 18 months, no words at all. Bettina felt alone, not understanding why her older brother and sister weren’t home like they used to be. One day, after taking care of Tiffany and doing her homework, she complained to her older brother (17) and sister (14), who had little sympathy, saying, “now you know how we felt when you came home.” Bettina turned and ran to her room feeling lost and alone wondering, what happened to my family?

How does Bettina’s behavior make sense?

Case #2) Peter is a husky 5’8” tall and wears a size 13 shoe at 10 years old. He attends an all boys private school. Folding himself into his desk alongside his smaller classmates, Peter struggles to stay in his own too small space. He comes from a wealthy family and lives in a spacious town house with a full staff of servants. His parents travel frequently, leaving Peter and his brother in the care of their nanny.Shortly after lunch one day, Peter began feeling ill and vomited in the carpeted classroom around 2pm. A couple of classmates helped clean up the mess while the teacher helped clean Peter off and then took him to the school nurse. The nurse then called Peter’s home, spoke to the nanny and learned that his parents were out of the country again. The nanny said she would come right away to pick Peter up.
However, at 4pm Peter was stretched out on a lobby bench still waiting and no one could get in touch with his home or family.

What might Peter understand about the world and his place in it?
Adolescence: Case Interpretation Paper

In 3-4 pages –Write about one of the cases below. As you consider what might be going on, be sure to describe the important developmental achievements of adolescence and why you think these are important. Then address how the child embodies and/or challenges what we typically expect based on developmental theory. In light of developmental theory, hypothesize about what you think might be going on for each child and how they might be experiencing the world. Frame your responses within the context of the developmental interaction approach (Shapiro & Nager, 1999). As part of your discussion, explicitly consider the ways in which children’s developmental experiences are shaped by border crossing and others’ perceptions of these children’s intersecting identities of race, class, gender, culture and ability/disability.

Required Format for Papers - 1” margins; double-spacing; and 12-point typeface; your name on each page; and page numbers, using headers and footers. Be sure to include a bibliography listing the sources you reference in your papers and be sure to staple all pages together.

Case #1) Sammy is 13 years old, in the 7th grade, and doing well in all of his classes in school except for science. His parents are bewildered because science used to be his favorite subject. His teacher recently reported to Sammy’s parents that Sammy has not completed seven different homework assignments this semester. When his parents questioned Sammy about what is going on he says “science is stupid and the homework is even stupider.” When pressed to explain, Sammy complains that his homework assignments consist of questions at the end of each textbook chapter in which he is asked to respond to these questions in what he describes as “full, full sentences.” At his teacher’s direction, he must repeat most of the question as part of the answer. He adds: “all that writing is a real waste of time.”

Case #2) Emily (12) rested her head on her classmate, Jake’s (13), shoulder as they walked down the hall arm in arm, raising a few eyebrows among her teachers. Later that evening, Emily confided in her mother, while brushing her American Girl doll’s hair that 2 boys had teased her during lunch until she cried and Jake stepped in to help her, escorting her back to their class. A month later during a placement conference discussing which group Emily should be with the following year, the principal said, “Emily isn’t as shy as you seem to think and she needs to be with the older children.” Her mother’s concern was that the school was pushing 12 year-old Emily to grow up too soon. Her mother wanted to nurture the “little girl” inside her daughter’s maturing body while the principal seemed to think differently.
Final Assignment: Poster Session

Using examples across the age bands to help us understand how your chosen developmental issue evolves across the lifespan. Listed below are a few possibilities and I assume there will be others that may interest you more.

**Issues of Identity:**
- Gender
- Race
- Social Class
- Sexual Identity

**Issues of Power:**
- Social Inclusion/Exclusion
- Bullying
- Friendships/Alliances
- Powerlessness/Depression
- Learning Disabilities
- Emotional Disabilities

**Physical Disabilities:**
- Blindness
- Deafness
- Birth Defects
- Chronic/Acute

**Illnesses:**
- Immigration Status
- Traumatic Head/Brain Injuries

**Social/Emotional Issues:**
- Trauma:
- Sexual Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Violence
- Divorce

Please gather at least 5 resources on the topic of your choice—there should be at least 3 text-based (book or journal article) and at least 2 web-based resources. For an annotated bibliography, write between 5 and 7 sentences describing each resource. Lastly, each person should prepare a handout to give us all an overview of the developmental issue being discussed and the lessons you have learned. Be sure to make enough copies of your annotated bibliography and handout for each of your classmates (27) and me.

Your poster should use examples across the lifespan to help us understand how your chosen developmental issue evolves across the lifespan. Then, from that context, you can more pointedly focus on your chosen developmental issue in the particular age band you are working with or intend to work with in your teaching career. The following is a list of the components of your Poster Session assignment:

1. A **poster** that can stand on its own (content-wise) using both text and image.
2. A brief **handout** outlining the important lessons you learned from your research.
3. An **annotated bibliography** of at least 5 resources on the developmental issue of your choice—there should be at least 3 text-based (book or journal article) and at least 2 web-based resources. For each resource you list, provide a brief description of the resource informing someone unfamiliar with the resource of what they may learn and who the target audience of the resource is in an annotation of between 5 and 7 sentences.
4. Make enough **copies** of your handout and annotated bibliography for each of your classmates (27) and 1 for me. The reason I ask you to make copies of your work for your classmates is so that everyone will leave the course with a packet of information on a wide range of topics you may not be familiar with but will likely emerge in your classroom. This resource can give you an opportunity to get good information quickly in those instances when time is of the essence.
Bibliography


