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GRADUATE COLLEGE

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PERSONAL PEDAGOGICAL THEORY
BUILDING OF A FIRST-YEAR EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

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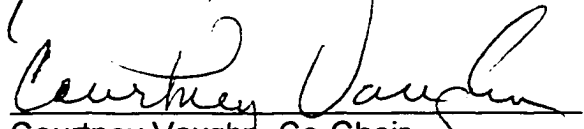
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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PERSONAL PEDAGOGICAL THEORY
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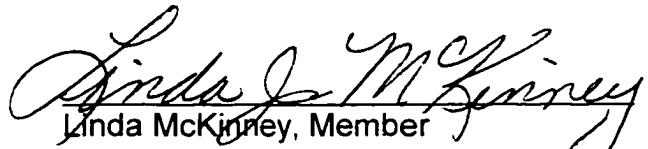
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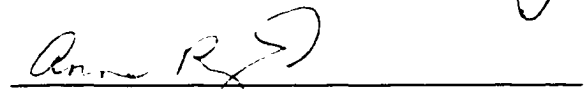
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ABSTRACT

This case study addressed the ways in which Lisa, an early childhood first-year teacher, thought about teaching and learning. This investigation involved Lisa's theory-building process, rooted in her educational biography and extending into the first year of her teaching career. Lisa's evolving personal pedagogical theory was closely examined to identify factors that most strongly affected her beliefs about teaching and learning. Interviews (formal and informal), videotaped classroom observations, and the participant's reflective journal entries were the sources of data collected in this study. The data suggested that Lisa's life experiences played a dominant role in building her theory. Those experiences included her days as a student, a control-orientation to her environment, and interaction with her Residency Team—with an emphasis placed on the mentoring relationship. It was determined that Lisa entered a university teacher education program with a personal pedagogical theory already formulated. The elements of her theory included: 1) learning is external, 2) teachers transmit knowledge to students, and 3) following instruction leads to success. She was not aware of her deep-rooted theory, yet she consistently based classroom practice decisions in light of the three elements. Lisa's theory reflected an interesting mix of romanticism and cultural transmission ideologies. Research studies examining the thought processes of classroom teachers are relatively limited. The complexity of the influencing factors and the thought processes of first-year teachers—how each affects the development of a personal pedagogical theory—needs further exploration.

The words teaching and teacher evoke in almost everyone particular memories and images. For some, these memories are dull, even fearful — they include boredom, routine, and worse. For those of us who construct lives in teaching, these images are necessarily changing and growing, and while they are sometimes vivid and concrete, they can as often be characterized by wonder. In either case, images of teaching can fill us with awe, and we can choose to see within them an abiding sense of challenge.
(Ayers, 2001, p.1)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Educational and psychological research are at the point when the study of the human mind is at the forefront (Lindsay, 1998; Puckett, Marshall & Davis, 1999). How do people learn? What is the thought process that transpires in gaining new knowledge? How is knowledge transformed into practical use? What factors impact the thought process? While these questions are often asked about infants and young children, they also pertain to the personal pedagogical theory-building of teachers. Specifically, how do early childhood teachers interpret, comprehend, and implement pedagogical knowledge?

When planning and implementing curriculum, professional organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) promote consideration of research directly related to understanding best practice. A growing number of authors (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Jensen, 1998; Sprenger, 1999) urge educators to consider how children learn and, when teaching, the many complexities involved in learning. In order to determine how teachers face this challenge, teacher educators need to know how they think and how they make decisions about teaching. The purpose of this study is to provide a glimpse of this process. Several research questions guided this investigation: How do teachers think about teaching and learning? What principal elements influence the construction of a personal pedagogical theory? What does a teacher consider when making decisions regarding the complexities of life in the classroom? Are familiar assumptions used as building blocks toward developing

a personal pedagogical theory? If so, where did the assumptions originate? Do personal theories remain intact or do they change?

Importance to the Research Community

In Isenberg's (1990) review of studies pertaining to the thinking of teachers and their belief about classroom practice, she points out that "Teachers' thinking and beliefs are integral to understanding the full picture of teaching. Although increased attention is being given to teachers' thought processes, this aspect of the teaching process is least researched in the literature" (pp. 325-326). In agreement with Isenberg's comment, Russell and Munby (1991) state, "While there is an implicit acknowledgement that actions and performances can be learned through experiences, there is little understanding of how this comes about" (p. 164).

For example, there are a number of studies which have explored teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning (Doyle, 1997; Fang, 1996; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hoffman, 1986; Hollingsworth, 1989). Life histories (Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Schön, 1983), teacher preparation (Grossman, 1992; Tillema, 1997), the impact of teacher mentors (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Tellez, 1992), social interaction (Kettle & Sellars, 1996; Powell, 1996), teachers as researchers (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992), adopting a teaching metaphor (Tobin, 1990), and conditions of the workplace (Flores, 2001; Zeichner & Gore, 1990) are prevalent issues in recent teacher education literature concerning teacher beliefs and practices.

Researchers recognize the intricacy involved in learning to teach (Fang, 1996). While teaching is an integrated process, studies tend to examine relevant topics, as noted above, separately. Although there is valuable information to be gained by studying each aspect individually, a richer, more nearly complete understanding of how teacher theories evolve might be gained by simultaneously investigating the interaction of these influencing factors and how they affect teachers' thought processes.

Importance to Early Childhood

When a teacher graduates with a degree in early childhood education and yet possesses a personal pedagogical theory which dictates the application of classroom techniques suitable for older children, an environment of inappropriate practice for young children might possibly unfold (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The NAEYC (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) elaborates on the necessity of understanding the concept of "developmentally appropriate practice" (p. 3) in decision making when teaching young children. Teacher educators see students who, time and time again, appear to have a solid grasp of theoretical knowledge and yet enter the first year as a classroom teacher and revert to developmentally inappropriate practices. What causes this to happen? It is hoped that this study will illuminate several possible explanations.

Importance to Teacher Education

“Understanding . . . teachers’ individual theories and how they influence their learning will inform and hopefully strengthen the teacher education practice” (Whitbeck, 2000, p. 129). Teacher educators’ understanding of the personal internal process of theory-building may provide opportunities for teachers to recognize connections or lack of connections between their philosophy of learning and their actions (Hollingsworth, 1989; Schubert, 1986). Hopefully this will be continued throughout their teaching careers.

Today it is necessary for teachers to acknowledge state and national mandated curriculum guidelines. They must know how to manage the classroom environment to meet the guidelines. Everyday decisions are made in determining materials and activities appropriate for particular grade levels. In the field of education today, teachers must encourage parent involvement, prepare students for standardized tests, be aware of cultural diversity, and be well-informed of current health and safety issues. Due to the constantly changing and growing demands placed on teachers, teacher educators cannot possibly inform future teachers of everything they will need to know. However, they must provide students with a means to examine new criteria thoroughly as they arise and be able to determine the best way to implement newly presented requirements to be compatible with personal theories of teaching and learning (Fang, 1996; Rodgers & Chaillé, 1998).

Understanding the ways in which teachers build a personal pedagogical theory provides insight into their thought process as they continue to develop and

strengthen personal beliefs of how children learn best and the methods most appropriate to bring about children's maximum potential for learning.

Understanding the thought process and the effects of influencing factors may change the way teacher educators think about their students and about the design of their programs: "additional research is needed to determine precisely how supervisors facilitate preservice teachers' knowledge growth" (Hollingsworth, 1989, p. 187).

Theoretical Framework

There are two theories which prove to be especially helpful in guiding this research project. One is the equilibration theory of Jean Piaget (1967), and the other is Edward Deci and Richard Ryan's (1982) self-determination theory. Both theories provide awareness into how knowledge develops in human organisms and regard autonomy as a necessary component in building personal self-governing theory. The influence of external factors on the ways in which people think and make sense of their environment is vital, according to Piaget (1973) and Ryan and Deci (2000).

Equilibration Theory

Piaget's equilibration theory (Chapman, 1992) involves a process directly related to personal theory construction. Equilibration is considered to be a key process for individual autonomy (Fleener & Rodgers, 1999). Piaget's theory of cognitive development involves maturation, experience with the physical environment, social interaction, and equilibration. All four areas are intertwined

and necessary to theory-building. Equilibration involves the thought process which organizes, transforms and constructs personal theories. For this reason, the equilibration theory has been selected to help develop an understanding of how teachers think about teaching and learning.

Equilibration refers to the continuous movement of the states of cognitive equilibrium and disequilibrium. However, the steady state of equilibrium is never obtained due to the constant introduction of new information and conflicting ideas by the environment. Through the balancing process of assimilation and accommodation, existing schemes are used to interpret reality. However, in this process, new information that does not fit with current structures arises and causes a disturbance or perturbation and is referred to as disequilibrium (Chapman, 1992; Reiman, 1999).

Two types of perturbations which create cognitive dissonance are contradictions and lacunae--gaps in knowledge (Chapman, 1992; Piaget, 1995). These disturbances may occur between an individual and his or her environment or between an individual and one or more other persons.

A difference in opinion is an example of a contradiction, thus, quite possibly resulting in argumentation. Argumentation is a necessary skill in alternating and balancing different points of view in order to organize and transform thoughts (Kuhn, 1992).

Lacunae--gaps in knowledge--are the realization that information is missing in order to pursue a desired result. Piaget (1965) stated that interaction between persons of "equal footing," conducting investigations was a source of

knowledge construction for both participants. Piaget recognized the process of inquiry or interrogation as a means of obtaining the gap in knowledge. However, he believed that simply asking an authority-figure for the answer involved the transmission of knowledge, a unilateral transfer, thus, closing the door to the discovery process of new knowledge.

As schemes are modified, the newly formed structures are used to assimilate reality. This process of equilibrating is related to autonomy and takes place continuously, repeating itself and moving to higher levels of organization (Piaget, 1995). Autonomy "is acting in accordance with one's core system of understandings, values and beliefs" (Fleener & Rodgers, 1999, p. 14).

Some authors (DeVries & Zan, 1994) refer to autonomy as self-regulation and proclaim that an autonomous individual is one who is able to make his or her own decisions. While this simplistic definition is accurate, it does not fully express the complex issue of autonomy. Piaget incorporates a more involved meaning of autonomy than the ability to self-regulate into his work (Piaget, 1965; Youniss & Damon, 1992). Autonomy can be seen from both a moral and intellectual perspective. The moral point of view replaces the authority norms of rules and values that have been imposed in childhood with the norm of reciprocity (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987; Miserandino, 1996). From the intellectual point of view, there is a freedom to think, form and take action on personal beliefs (Piaget, 1965; Youniss & Damon, 1992). A common necessity to moral and intellectual autonomy is mutual respect. In young children, respect is unilateral in that it constrains children to obey adults, yet the reverse is not true. Once a child has

begun to develop concrete operations (which occurs around the age of seven or eight), he or she can put himself or herself in another child's position and gain empathy for the other's perspective. Out of this new mode of communication between peers or equals emerges mutual respect. Cooperation coordinates the various points of view into a reciprocity that opens the way for autonomy (Piaget, 1965; Piaget, 1967, Haworth, 1986).

Self-Determination Theory

Deci and Ryan have developed a theory concerning personal motivation, which includes the external factors influencing motivation and the reactions of people to the environment (Deci & Ryan, 1982; Deci & Ryan, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Their most recent research is primarily concerned with the social-contextual conditions that optimize personal development, performance, and well-being. In the field of psychology, motivation is viewed to be an important topic in understanding the basis for cognitive and social control (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Deci and Ryan (1996) have conducted experiments investigating the direct effects of autonomy support versus control and report that "there was greater depth of processing, resulting in better comprehension and mastery of the material when the context was autonomy supportive" (Deci & Ryan, 1996, p. 172). Knowing the nurturing environment, autonomy supportive or controlling, might open a window of perception about how an individual examines and construes his or her world, in particular, the arena of teaching and learning.

Deci and Ryan (1985) describe autonomy as the ability to make a genuine choice, which is purely genuine only when the individual weighs another option

and is willing to accept the ramifications of an option differing from external constraints. For example, a high school student is about to graduate and is grappling with the decision whether or not to attend college. External constraints place limitations on salaries and career opportunities. The autonomy oriented individual will consider external constraints in decision making without the pressure of stress or guilt. An autonomy oriented person is one who seeks and masters new challenges. Deci and Ryan refer to the autonomy oriented individual as one who is motivated intrinsically. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), an individual who is internally motivated can be characterized as a highly self-determining person.

Also characteristic of autonomy orientation is an individual's realization of his or her own organismic and integrated needs, feelings, and beliefs. Being aware of one's self is an extremely important aspect of autonomy orientation. This awareness is nonpressured and lacking anxiety (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Miserandino, 1996).

Deci and Ryan (1985) also describe choiceful accommodation as another characteristic of autonomy orientation. When an autonomous person finds himself or herself in an impossible situation which cannot be changed, he or she will gather information from the events and accommodate to the situation with satisfaction, much like Piaget's process of assimilation and accommodation. An opportunity for self-determination arises when the person realizes the need to accommodate (Deci, 1980; Deci & Ryan, 1985). "Self-determination involves

both actively effecting change and accommodating to what is not appropriately changed" (Deci, 1980, p. 183).

Deci and Ryan (1985) report that autonomous individuals see their environment as information – information used in making choices. Autonomous individuals are able to recognize controlling situations and remain self-determining in the majority of instances. In a controlling situation, an individual's ability to be self-determining is diminished, and pressure is felt to think and believe in a particular way (Reeve & Deci, 1996).

Furthermore, intrinsic motivation is the core attribute which stimulates the individual to seek and master challenges, to relate and accommodate to events, and to gain a sense of personal control. Three basic ways in which people seek, create, and evaluate events are autonomy orientation, control orientation, and impersonal (amotivation) orientation. All three motivations may be characteristic of an individual; however, one will most likely dominate.

As discussed previously, the autonomy oriented persons are self-determining individuals. They are able to recognize controlling situations and incorporate information gathered from their environment in making decisions.

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), the control oriented person is in a power struggle or conflict between the controller and the controlled. Control oriented adults are often highly competent and effective, having learned how to obtain the satisfaction and approval of others. The needs and desires of others are given priority over personal needs and feelings. The control oriented person

will select controlling situations in which to be involved. Personal theories constructed rely heavily on the views of others.

The impersonal orientation person has developed a sense of helplessness against the external forces of the environment. Internally, this person is unable to handle personal drives and emotions, and often displays high levels of anxiety.

A person's orientation is dependent on personal experiences and perception of the environment. The meaning an individual gives to an event reflects how he or she views reality and whether or not he or she interprets the event as informational, controlling, or amotivating (Ryan & Deci, 2000). How a teacher views the environment may have a direct effect on how a personal pedagogical theory is built.

Purpose of the Study

Taken together, these two theories may help explain the development of teachers' personal theories. The purpose of this study is to gain understanding into the ways teachers think about teaching. To attain this information, this paper will focus on three primary questions: 1) What elements comprise the first-year teacher's personal pedagogical theory? 2) What factors strongly influence the evolving personal pedagogical theory of the first-year teacher? 3) What are the effects of influencing factors on the ways which the first year teacher thinks about teaching and learning? Rather than look at factors as separate entities, the interconnected role of influencing factors in the construction of a personal pedagogical theory will be considered.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

A growing body of literature suggests that even most seasoned and expert teachers build informal, contextual, highly personal theories from their own experiences.

(Kagan, 1992, p. 163)

The aim of this literature review is to examine the myriad ways, as found in the research, in which teachers think about teaching and learning and, more explicitly, how that thinking is constructed on a personal level. Although there are differing views regarding the process through which a teacher builds a personal pedagogical theory, there is a common goal in each of the research studies selected for this literature review. That goal is to gain understanding in the way teachers think about teaching.

What is Meant by Personal Pedagogical Theory-Building?

In this paper I use the term *personal pedagogical theory-building* to define the evolutionary process which occurs in the life of a teacher. The meaning of this phrase is best understood by considering the description of each word.

"Personal" represents the individual who is involved in the process of constructing a theory (Kuhn, 1992). "Personal," as implied, means this theory is understood by the individual who built it. The theory may not have the same meaning for others, it may not make sense to others, or it belongs solely to one

individual. It is the way in which one person thinks about his or her own thinking (Kuhn, 1992; Piaget, 1967).

A “pedagog” as defined by Merriam-Webster (1993) is a teacher.

Pedagogy refers to the science of teaching. When a theory is described as a pedagogical theory, it refers to a theory about teaching. Teaching goes hand-in-hand with learning (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987). All teachers have a personal philosophy of how students learn best, whether they are consciously aware of it or not (Kagan, 1992; Johnston, 1994; Powell, 1992; Rodgers & Dunn, 1997; Schubert, 1986). Views about learning guide teaching (Kamii, 1985). Therefore, “pedagogical” in this literature review includes both teaching and learning.

“Theory-building” in the context of this literature review is defined as the reconstruction of prior knowledge that takes place when new information is encountered. The new information, when it does not fit the person’s understanding, causes an internal struggle to occur in the process of making sense of the new information (Harrington, 1994; Rodgers & Dunn, 1997). It is not a matter of discarding and replacing “old” knowledge with “new” knowledge; rather, it is a process of reconstructing knowledge to make sense of the surrounding world (Forman & Kushner, 1983; Rodgers & Dunn, 1997).

Why is Personal Pedagogical Theory-Building Important to Understand?

A point that emphasizes the powerful impact which understanding the theory-building process has on the educational community concerns the teacher educator and the preservice teacher. Teacher educators who are informed about

personal theory-building and realize that preservice teachers enter the college classroom with an existing personal theory about teaching and learning are able to plan activities that initiate a challenge, a conflicting idea, or struggle that will cause preservice teachers to realize, examine, and reconstruct their personal pedagogical theory (Rodgers & Chaillé, 1998). Teacher educators' understanding of the individual, internal process of theory-building better allows them to provide opportunities for preservice teachers to recognize connections, or the lack thereof, between their philosophy of learning and their actions (Schubert, 1986).

Organization of the Review

My review begins with a presentation of several different definitions of what a personal theory is thought to be and how it develops, including existing terminology used to describe how teachers think. I then present, with a one-by-one method (Cone & Foster, 1993), a variety of studies which have been conducted to gain understanding in the thinking of teachers. This is followed by a summary of the studies reviewed. My conclusion illuminates the gaps found in the research, creating a purpose for further study.

Conflicting Definitions and Terminology

A review of the literature on the topic of teachers' personal theory-building in relationship to teaching and learning reveals discrepancies in the definition and application of key terms, such as theory, personal, and philosophy. This review is not an attempt to expose a full array of the definitions. Rather, the purpose is

simply to present a basis for understanding the complex web of possibilities in defining these terms, as well as how each term relates to personal pedagogical theory-building as viewed by various researchers.

Zais (1976) describes theory as a process in which a person views reality by looking at it piece by piece, putting the pieces back together again, and relating the pieces one to another. This process enables a person to extract meaning and understanding, therefore, making sense of his or her world through personal experiences. Zais adds that theory is never void of knowledge; this notion appears to be the uncontested characteristic of theory among scholars seeking to define theory (McCutcheon, 1988; Piaget, 1995). Yet, many disagreements about the nature of theory prevent the existence of a universal definition (Danielewicz, 1998).

From a constructivist perspective, developmental theorist Piaget describes personal theory-building as “thinking about one’s own thought” (Kuhn, 1992; p. 204). As a person thinks about his or her thoughts, reflection occurs. Reflection is not for the purpose of contradicting one’s thoughts, but for predicting and interpreting lived experiences (Piaget, 1995). Necessary to the construction of knowledge is the interaction of the individual with the environment (Piaget, 1967, 1995). According to Piaget cognitive development requires social and physical experiences (Piaget, 1995). Social interaction allows a person to see another’s viewpoint, initiating a conflict and challenging a rethinking of his or her own viewpoint. Knowledge is constructed by debating points of conflict (Kamii,

1984, 1985; Piaget, 1967). Constructing knowledge is making sense of one's world (Rodgers & Dunn, 1997).

Theory is defined by Schubert (1986) as an awareness of the personal connections individuals make between actions and assumptions. Schubert refers to "philosophical assumptions" interchangeably with the term "theory." He stresses the necessity "to look continuously at our own thought and action and to discover more about its character and consistency" (Schubert, 1986, p. 117). Although Schubert's usage of theory, philosophy, and assumptions reveals no distinction between them, he does concur with Piaget on the point that interaction with the environment is a guiding factor in developing a personal theory.

Definitions of theory, philosophy, beliefs, and assumptions continue to intertwine throughout the literature as disclosed by the assortment of phrases used to describe the same thing – how teachers' think. Saving the details for a more thorough look into the studies of the following authors for later in this review, here is an overview of several terms found in the research that characterize the work of particular authors. Connelly and Clandinin (1986a, 1988, 1999) refer to "personal practical knowledge" as capturing "the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). Pinar and Grumet (1976) label the process in which a person knows about himself or herself as "currere." Powell (1996) attaches the term "personal practical philosophies" to the process in which teachers construct philosophies. He does not elaborate on what is meant by philosophy. Bennett (1992) investigates the development of preservice

teachers' "pedagogical knowledge schemata." Nettle (1998) examines the "beliefs" of teachers, and Grossman (1992) is concerned with the "pedagogical thinking" of teachers. Danielewicz (1998) identifies her area of interest as "personal theories of teaching" while Rodgers and Dunn (1997) focus on the construction of "personal practical theories." The variation in terminology creates some frustration in identifying studies relating to personal pedagogical theory-building. Yet the studies included in this review of the literature are all attempts to understand teachers' thinking.

Extant Understanding of Teachers' Thinking

Personal Experiences Reported through Autobiographical Data

A variety of methods and theoretical premises have been used in attempts to make sense of the process of personal pedagogical theory-building. An autobiographical account, which is collected through interviews of participants relating personal experiences and recorded in narrative form, is considered by some to reveal a person's thought process (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986a). William Pinar's work was an important forerunner of this method. Pinar, known predominately in the field of curriculum development, states that a conscious thought process occurs as an individual reflects on personal historical events (Pinar & Grumet, 1976).

Curriculum, according to Pinar and Reynolds (1992), can be studied as a phenomenological text. As the story unfolds, the reader finds a primary character of educational curriculum to be the classroom teacher (Connelly & Clandinin,

1988; McCutcheon, 1988; Walker & Soltis, 1997). "The picture painted ... is one of teachers as thinkers who make many decisions that create the curriculum in classrooms" (McCutcheon, 1988, p. 202). Madeline Grumet partnered with Pinar to develop a narrative approach of recording the autobiographies of teachers. The purpose of the autobiographical method is to examine the history of oneself in order for that person to gain insight and understanding into one's own true identity through everyday experiences (Grumet, 1992).

The term applied by Pinar to label the process in which a person comes to know one's self is "currere" (Kesson, 1999; Pinar & Grumet, 1976; Pinar & Reynolds, 1992; Schubert, 1986). Schubert (1986) refers to currere as personal theorizing. Currere is based on the autobiographical accounts of educational experiences which may occur in a formal educational setting such as a classroom or in an informal setting outside the parameters of a physical classroom environment.

Currere consists of four sequential steps in which autobiographical accounts are intensely examined. Regression, the first step, concentrates on past experiences. Progression, the second step, requires a meditation of the future in hopes of uncovering aspirations and directions. During the third step, the analysis stage, an examination is made of the first and second steps for a better understanding of one's self. The fourth and last step is the synthetical stage. This concerns the present. It is the step in which the individual makes decisions concerning personal social issues, such as whom they will work with and in what capacity (Pinar & Grumet, 1976).

The work of Pinar and Grumet is largely credited for the successful establishment of autobiography in curriculum research (Kesson, 1999). "It provides a method for systematic search of our inner experiences" (Kesson, 1999, p. 94). Although autobiographical accounts may provide individuals with insight into their identity, little appears to be accomplished in establishing a personal theory about teaching and learning. The autobiographical method by Pinar utilizes interviews as the only source of data collection, which might be considered a weakness for any research study. Those who followed Pinar and implemented autobiographical accounts into their studies usually included one or more additional forms of data to add confidence to their findings, as seen in the studies reviewed below.

In the arena of education, among those influenced by the work of Pinar are Connelly and Clandinin (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986a, 1986b, 1988, 1999). Through autobiographical narrative records focusing on the personal experiences of teachers, they attempt "to understand teachers as knowers: knowers of themselves, of their situations, of children, of subject matter, of teaching, of learning" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 1). Connelly and Clandinin (1986b, 1988, 1999) claim credit for coining the phrase "personal practical knowledge" to describe the teacher as a knower.

A term designed to capture the idea of experiences in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons. Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal

practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practice. It is, for any teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25).

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1988), their term "personal practical knowledge" was derived from the separate works of Lampert and Elbaz. As explained by Connelly and Clandinin (1988), Elbaz referred to "practical knowledge" in his phenomenological work to understand the kinds of knowledge teachers value and use in the classroom. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) report that Lampert uses the term "personal knowledge" with his investigations into the identities of teachers and what he or she cares about. Lampert's interest is with the way a teacher handles various problems which arise in the classroom.

Connelly and Clandinin's (1986b) case study of two seventh grade science teachers used the narrative method in attempting to find specific meanings of classroom actions of students and teachers. This in-depth study transpired over a five-year time frame. Field notes and formal open-ended interviews were the preparation tools in building narrative accounts of each participant. Letters containing field notes from the researchers were sent to participants who checked for accuracy of content and for the purpose of triangulation. The research interviewer-observer became a participant-observer (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986b, 1988; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Here it is important to point out that Connelly and Clandinin's implementation of the word "personal" includes the close involvement of the participant-observer, which

places the study on a more personal level with the researchers rather than referring solely to the thoughts of the participant. This can best be explained in the following excerpt from the Connelly and Clandinin (1986b) study:

...it is a mutual reconstruction developed as the researcher and teacher-participant jointly explore origins and explanations in interview and in the narrative accounts as written, discussed, and re-written. Personal philosophy then, is a way the researchers and participants jointly come to think about the practitioner's work. (p. 307)

Although much discussion and collaboration is present between the researchers and the participants in the work described above, there is no mention of social interaction between the teacher and the students as a means that might challenge the participant to think about how his or her "personal practical knowledge" came to be. This implies a teacher's classroom actions are directly explained by the teacher's thoughts about teaching. There is no acknowledgment of the way in which classroom practice might, in fact, help teachers to construct their understanding of teaching and learning.

A number of other studies have been conducted using the autobiographical method. Powell (1996) frames his qualitative study in the methods of Connelly and Clandinin. As with Connelly and Clandinin (1986b), Powell recognizes the biographies of teachers - their lived experiences - as significant windows into understanding how personal philosophies are enacted in the classroom. In addition to the personal practical knowledge framework, Powell includes the theoretical perspective of "social constructivism" in his study. He

views the social interaction of students and teachers as a beginning focus into understanding how teachers construct “personal practical philosophies.” Powell’s (1996) findings suggest “five interrelated factors” (p. 155) which form the foundation of a teacher’s personal practical philosophy about curriculum. The factors are 1) personal epistemology; 2) beliefs about curriculum; 3) personal knowledge of content to be taught; 4) image of self as teacher; and 5) beliefs about students. Powell’s usage of the word “personal” places the emphasis on the teacher and does not include the role of participant-observer in the definition as did Connelly and Clandinin (1986b). There is a voiced awareness by Powell (1996) of the importance of social interaction between the teacher and the student as an element in the construction of a personal practical philosophy. However, Powell’s primary emphasis is seen in the teacher’s understanding of the students.

Bennett (1992) uses autobiographical interviews in her study and focuses on what she calls the “Four stages in students’ pedagogical knowledge schemata” (p. 119). Bennett asserts that her study is based on the theoretical frameworks of pedagogical schemata, professional knowledge, thematic teacher education, and teaching perspectives. These frameworks are interwoven as Bennett collects data by means of concept mapping, reflective journals, videotaped classroom observations, stimulated recall interviews as well as autobiographical interviews. Bennett’s study takes place within the parameters of a three-year graduate teacher education program, the “Teacher as Decision Maker Program.”

Bennett's (1992) four stages of students' pedagogical knowledge schemata – a phrase devised by Bennett – refer to students' views about teaching. In stage one, students' views are based on personal experiences and so lacks any theoretical base. Stage two is usually recognized by the presence of language common to a theoretical scheme of teaching. A practicum often precedes stage three in which, according to Bennett (1992), a major restructuring of pedagogical schema is evidenced. Students now are able to make connections between pedagogical theories and classroom practice. A strengthening of these connections occurs in stage four.

Bennett (1992) points out that her four identified stages of students' pedagogical knowledge schemata are most clearly seen through the use of concept mapping. Concept mapping is a form of organizing a person's own growth and understanding a particular concept, in this case teaching. Students construct personal concept maps four times during the three-year program Bennett studied. After the first and fourth maps are developed, students are individually interviewed. Frequently the first concept map reflects an idealistic view of teaching and learning. At the time of the third concept map, Bennett reports observing a cognitive restructuring of students' understanding of teaching and learning. Autobiographical interviews and reflective journal writing lend credibility to Bennett's observation.

Powell's work on career change supports that of Bennett. Using concept mapping and other data collection strategies, he describes four stages of

pedagogical knowledge schemata development which are closely related to those documented in Bennett's work (Powell, 1991).

Through autobiographical accounts much is learned about the pedagogical knowledge and beliefs teachers possess. Narratives help determine personal philosophies by exploring life experiences and action in the classroom. Nevertheless, rarely do reports include the significance of teachers' thought processes in relationship to evolving personal pedagogical theories. Thus, the question remains: How does the development of a personal pedagogical theory actually happen?

Formal Education as a Model

As reported in several studies, teachers' personal experiences, specifically formal educational backgrounds, are emphasized as an important aspect in forming beliefs and images about themselves as teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986b; Nettle, 1998; Powell, 1996). A study by Nettle (1998) used a questionnaire to measure the beliefs about teaching that students have upon entering a teacher education program. Before and after a three-week practicum, a student survey was conducted to identify the changes, if any, in the students' beliefs about teaching. Nettle reports that students' beliefs at the completion of their practicum were closely associated to the beliefs about teaching held by their supervising teachers. A transformation of beliefs is thought to have occurred through modeling and communication. Nettle claims this study supports Piaget's work on cognitive development, specifically equilibration. However, no evidence was supplied to support the idea that change was experienced through

equilibration. Nevertheless, role models are reported by Nettle (1998) to play a significant part in how novice teachers view themselves as teachers. Nettle's findings support the research of Bandura (1977), who demonstrates in his studies that human behavior is learned by watching someone else perform the behavior. The other person is the model, and the process is identified as modeling. In this way, it is quite likely that a beginning student teacher adopts the behaviors of teachers from which he or she received academic instruction.

Influence Stemming from Higher Education Course Experiences

Grossman (1992) and Nettle (1998) elaborate on teacher education courses as sources for developing pedagogical thinking as well as understanding subject matter. They stress the importance of a teacher's competence in his or her subject matter content as a major factor influencing self-image. In contrast Danielewicz (1998) agrees that higher education courses strongly influence the way teachers see themselves as teachers, but for a different reason than learning subject matter content knowledge, as concluded by Grossman (1992) and Nettle (1998). Danielewicz (1998) envisions the college classroom as an environment that immerses students in language activities: spoken, written, formal, informal, individual, and collaborative. Teachers are creators of their own personal theories, and this creation occurs through language: "...university classroom experiences – including reading, discussions, writing activities, and all discursive interactions – can enable soon-to-be teachers to think about personal theories of teaching" (Danielewicz, 1998, p. 30). Danielewicz points primarily to language immersion as the key to building personal theories.

Danielewicz (1998) believes it is necessary to put thought into words, written or spoken, in order to form meaning. She argues that people may not know what they believe until they have assembled words to represent their ideas. On this point, Connelly and Clandinin (1986b) agree that discussion and narrative accounts are necessary to gain a clear understanding of what actually takes place in the classroom, which in their judgment is the basis for developing teachers' personal philosophies about teaching. Therefore, experiences in teacher education courses help with teacher self-image formation.

The Influence of Personal Reflection in Theory-Building

A number of researchers view reflection as an important aspect in personal theory-building about learning and teaching. The reflection issue has been addressed several ways: experiments teachers are involved in on a daily basis in their classrooms (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986a; McCutcheon, 1988), reflection on personal learning (Rodgers & Dunn, 1997), and reflection to gain a feeling for the process of theorizing (Danielewicz, 1998). Millies (1992) recognizes the importance placed on teacher reflection: "Teachers giving serious consideration to what gives meaning and direction to their lives and work could be an essential part of teachers growing and changing" (p. 27). Schubert and Ayers (1992) identify reflection as a way for teachers to recognize their personal pedagogical philosophy.

Schubert and Ayers (1992) have developed the *Teacher Lore Project*. As with Pinar and Grumet (1976) and Connelly and Clandinin (1986a), the *Teacher*

Lore Project is an attempt to better understand teachers. This understanding is gained as

...conscientious teachers reflect seriously on their work. They think and feel carefully about what they do and why they do it. They use their experiences as a basis for fashioning responses to similar situations that they encounter daily ... Such teachers continuously monitor their underlying assumptions about teaching and learning, their personal philosophies of education, if you will. They tune in carefully to the way their assumptions both guide and are created by practice. They reflect on or about their experiences when they have the time, and they reflect and rebuild their orientation in the course of experience. (Schubert & Ayers, 1992, p. ix)

Influenced by Dewey, Schubert and Ayers (1992) surmise that reflection is enhanced when teachers are able to rethink their perspectives through interaction with other teachers. "Perhaps the greatest potential of teacher lore resides in an oral tradition among teachers who exchange and reconstruct perspectives together" (Schubert & Ayers, 1992, p. vii).

Dewey (1933) was an advocate for teachers as researchers. He emphasized the need for teachers to observe and reflect on their personal classroom practices, integrating this information into personal evolving theories of teaching and learning. Dewey recognized the teacher not only as a teacher, but also as a learner. Schön (1983) (influenced by Dewey) and Cochran-Smith

and Lytle (1993) are contemporary scholars continuing the tradition of teacher research.

Teachers as Researchers

Teacher research is a specialized case of reflection, wherein, teacher researchers critically reflect on classroom practice and provide a glimpse of the ways teachers and students construct knowledge as a joint venture. Some scholars reject the methodology and findings of teacher researchers as genuine contributions to the academic community and research on teaching. Some think teacher researchers should incorporate a specific scientific organizational format, characteristic of professional researchers (Mohr & Maclean, 1987). In contrast, supporters of teacher research envision a less structured design of work, developed exclusively by individual teachers in order to identify and seek answers to teachers' own questions (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Teacher research enthusiasts describe classroom teachers as personal theory-builders, armed with the knowledge of teaching and learning through the reflection on their individual experiences (Goodlad, 1990). Cochran-Smith and Lytle suggest looking at teacher research as a new genre: "...teacher research has just begun to be collected...and has not yet been synthesized or systematically critiqued" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p.10).

According to Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992), teachers are well suited to knowing about teaching.

Teachers are among those who have the authority to know – that is to construct "capital K" knowledge about teaching, learning, and schooling.

And what is worth knowing about teaching includes what teachers, who are researchers in their own classrooms, can know through their own systematic inquiry. (p. 448)

Furthermore, Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992) state that life histories of teachers guide teachers' interpretations of classroom experiences. This coincides with the work of several others previously mentioned (i.e., Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Schön, 1983), who have reported the influence of teachers' personal biographies on making pedagogical decisions.

Although reflection is considered a productive source in understanding teachers' thoughts, Tobin (1990) points out that decision making is not always a conscious effort on the part of the teacher. Not all teachers spend time reflecting. Instead, teachers often do what makes sense to them. Tobin suggests teachers adopt a self-defining metaphor to conceptualize particular teaching roles to guide and change the way in which they implement pedagogical practice. In selecting a self-descriptive metaphor, self-reflection about teaching and enacting the curriculum is a necessary step (Roth & Tobin, 2002). A pioneer in the use of metaphors as a tool to understand reality based on personal experiences was George Kelly. His ideas are elaborated below.

Personal Construct Theory

Kelly (1955) developed the personal construct theory, which incorporates metaphors to describe personal thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. According to Kelly (1955), everyone constructs his or her own belief system, and no two are identical. He also stated; all people develop beliefs based on past experiences

that bring meaning to the world around them. Very similar to Piaget's equilibration theory, Kelly (1955) explained that when individuals are confronted with an episode contrary to past experiences a reconstruction of thought happens. In this way people learn. In reference to the personal construct theory, Boeree (1997) reports:

We construct our anticipations using our past experiences.

When things don't happen the way they have in the past, we have to adapt, to reconstruct. This new experience alters our future anticipations.

We learn. Based on the results of our experiment – the behaviors we engage in – or our observation – the experiences we have – we either continue our faith in our theory of reality, or we change the theory.

(Boeree, 1997, Theory section, ¶ 10)

It is thought that a person does not have to remain constrained to particular beliefs. He or she is free to view events from a different perspective-metaphor, thus changing his or her convictions (Kelly, 1955).

Following the framework of Kelly's personal construct theory, Hopper (2003) recently described the use of metaphorical language. Metaphorical language was employed in the discovery of the evolution of teachers' thinking of pedagogical assumptions: "...offering a way of becoming aware of the biography that structures and guides a person's subjective judgments on a reality of teaching" (Hopper, 2003, ¶ 3). Once again, biography was a focal point in gaining insight into teachers' thinking.

A Constructivist Perspective on Personal Theory-Building

Yet another perspective of personal pedagogical theory-building is founded on the theoretical premise of Piaget's constructivist theory (Burk, 1996; Burk & Fry, 1996; DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987; Kuhn, 1992; Rodgers & Chaillé, 1998; Rodgers & Dunn, 1997). Piaget states that it is necessary for an individual to think about his or her own thoughts in order to build personal theories (Kuhn, 1992; Piaget, 1967). According to Piaget (1967), "the proper function of reflection is not to contradict but to predict and interpret experience" (p. 64). Being able to think about one's own beliefs as though these beliefs are objects of cognition is believed by Kuhn (1992) to define "Piaget's thinking about one's own thought" (p. 204). Piaget's constructivist theory is not about the collection of factual knowledge; instead, it is about knowing (Foreman & Kushner, 1983; Harrington, 1994; Rodgers & Dunn, 1997).

Rodgers and Dunn (1997) based their case study of one preservice teacher on Piaget's constructivist theory, recognizing that reasoning and action cannot be separated. The preservice teacher participant was in the final stage of a capstone course, which included both a classroom and laboratory component. Data were collected in several ways: 1) observations in the laboratory; 2) group discussions in the college classroom; 3) interaction with classmates during class; 4) informal discussions with classmates outside of class; 5) drafts of written work submitted by assigned teams of classmates; and 6) personal interviews conducted by researchers. According to Rogers and Dunn, as the preservice

teacher was introduced to the constructivist approach to teaching, she was unable to make this information fit into her already formulated personal practical theory. She did not question her own personal theory about learning and teaching. This preservice teacher's personal practical theory was built on her own experiences with learning, and she managed to keep them intact. However, in conversations with the researchers during the course of the study, it was thought that her personal practical theories were changing. Only as all the data were collected and examined did the researchers realize the lack of change. In agreement with the constructivist framework, Rodgers and Dunn (1997) recognized the importance of not separating reasoning and action: "interactions with colleagues and children would be more representative of a person's practical theory than general statements about beliefs and practices" (p. 10).

Closely related to Rodgers and Dunn's (1997) assumption that preservice teachers enter the teacher education program with personal practical theories about teaching and learning which are subject to reinvention "particularly as they interact with others" (Rodgers & Dunn, 1997, p. 10) is the belief of Kettle and Sellars (1996). They feel that preservice teachers enter the education program with partially formed practical theories about teaching which will be "elaborated and refined throughout the course of their training" (Kettle & Sellars, 1996, p. 20). The design of research by Kettle and Sellars (1996) was qualitative in methodology: specifically, a case study of two female preservice teachers in an undergraduate teacher education program. Interviews, audiotaped and transcribed, reflective journals of participants, and card sorting exercises were

the tools used for data collection. The purpose of the case study was to record changes in the participants' practical theories of teaching over a one-year time span. At the close of the study, the participants' practical theories about teaching had not changed. For example, one participant began the program by thinking the teacher should have control and hold the "right" answers, and though her classroom methods and environmental organization had changed slightly, she still held her viewpoint (practical theory) that teachers should be in control and that teachers have the answers (universal answers). Kettle and Sellars (1996) note the importance of social interaction with peers as a productive factor in theory-building: "In this study it was clear that interaction with peers encourages students to challenge existing views and their own views about teaching" (p. 23). This supports Piaget's (1967) constructivist theory, in that social interaction which challenges one's viewpoint is essential in constructing knowledge.

Danielewicz (1998) also expresses the idea that a preservice teacher has a personal theory about learning and teaching. At first glance, Danielewicz appears to support the study of Rodgers and Dunn (1997) in that a personal practical theory is reconstructed through questioning already held theories as new information becomes evident. However, Danielewicz implies that one participant of her study constructed a personal theory in one semester as the student "read, heard, and listened" (Danielewicz, 1998, p. 30) to lectures about theories of teaching. No mention was made of interaction with the social and physical environment as factors in the construction of a personal theory. There was no record of a personal struggle taking place as the student's present ideas

about learning and teaching were confronted with new ideas about teaching. Danielewicz's conclusions appear to be contradictory in that, as previously mentioned, she credits the immersion into language activities, including class discussions, as a trigger to thinking about personal theories of teaching and yet concludes the participant's personal pedagogical theory changed through the transmission of the professor's lectures.

Summary

In searching the literature for studies related to the development of personal pedagogical theory-building, a challenge, as previously stated, arose in identifying studies which actually examine the theory-building process of teaching and learning. The difficulty lay largely in the number of terms describing teachers' thinking as well as many different definitions explaining these terms. Terms such as "philosophical assumption" and "theory" are occasionally used interchangeably (e.g., Schubert, 1986). The term "personal" included the relationship of the researcher and participant in Connelly and Clandinin's (1986b) study of personal practical knowledge. Through a combined effort, the researcher helped the participant determine the participant's practical knowledge. The word "theory" also draws different responses from researchers. Bennett (1992) refers to pedagogical theories as formal theoretical schema, which she connects to classroom practice. Others define a personal theory of teaching and learning as a reconstruction of one's own thinking, through the biographies of personal

experiences and interaction with physical and social environments (Rodgers & Dunn, 1997).

The research designs in the studies cited were both qualitative and quantitative. Each study hoped to gain an understanding of teachers' thinking. Yet many researchers were satisfied in knowing only *what* teachers were thinking and how their thinking drove their classroom practice (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986a, 1986b, 1988, 1999; Bennett, 1992; Danielwicz, 1998; Grossman, 1992; Nettle, 1998; Powell, 1996). This way of examining teachers' thinking tends to flow in a linear direction. In opposition to this view, Rodgers and Dunn (1997) do not stop at acknowledging what teachers are thinking, but rather attempt to understand the process involved in how teachers construct their thinking. Although they recognize the influence of a personal practical theory of teaching and learning on classroom practice, Rodgers and Dunn (1997) also highlight the reciprocal role classroom practice plays on an individual's process of building a personal practical theory. They argue that reasoning and action work together, rather than as separate entities (Rogers & Dunn, 1997; Schön, 1983). Schubert (1986) is also aware of the interactive relationship between what he calls "assumptions and classroom practice." He, as well, recognizes the contribution of social interaction as teachers rethink and reconstruct personal perspectives through oral exchange. Whereas Rodgers and Dunn (1997) ground their work in the theoretical framework of the constructivist perspective, Schubert and Ayers' (1992) *Teacher Lore Project* is based on an action research approach. While not precluding a constructivist perspective, this approach recruits teachers as the

researchers and stems primarily from the work of John Dewey. Schubert and Ayers (1992) and Rodgers and Dunn (1997) share similar results, yet Rodgers and Dunn take their research further by examining the process.

Methodology

The common thread of interview as a data collection tool runs through all the studies reviewed. Interviews, whether formal, or informal, or written in narrative form as in autobiographical accounts (Bennett, 1992; Connelly & Clandinin, 1986b; Powell, 1996), reveal detailed information about teachers' own experiences and provide insight into teachers' thinking. Although an essential element, interviews alone present a relatively limited view in understanding the thinking of teachers. With the exception of Kettle and Sellars (1996), the studies reviewed here strengthened their research designs by incorporating an observation component into the data collection. Observation provides important evidence since it is an obvious means of determining a connection between participants' voiced thoughts and actual action. To make findings trustworthy, as well as facilitate triangulation, most of the studies reviewed here included some source of written data from the participant(s). In addition to interviews, reflective journals, exams, papers, unit plans, written teaching philosophies, and concept mapping are examples of data collection through written language used in the studies reviewed.

One way to study theory-building is to separate the personal pedagogical theory of a teacher and the classroom practices of the same individual. However, theory and practice are closely woven together and are best studied as one. A

teacher's theory affects classroom practice, and classroom practice affects the development of a teacher's personal theory (McCutcheon, 1988; Rodgers & Dunn, 1997; Schubert & Ayers, 1992).

Call for Further Research

Several authors recognize the powerful impact of social interaction on personal theory-building and urge further research in this area. Powell (1996) includes the social element in understanding the transformation of teachers' beliefs about teaching, their biographical experiences, and their content knowledge into classroom instruction: "Studies focusing on this transformation process may broaden our understanding of the relationship between prior experiences, existing classroom contexts, and social construction of personal practical philosophies" (Powell, 1996, p. 149). Kettle and Sellars (1996) are also aware of the impact of social interaction: "In this study it was clear that interaction with peers encourages students to challenge existing views and their own views about teaching" (p. 23). They express a need for further study in the area of peer interaction and the effect it has on the development of personal practical theories.

In Isenberg's (1990) review of studies pertaining to teachers' thinking and teachers' beliefs in relationship to classroom practice, she pointed out that much research examined the beliefs of teachers while the actual thought process remained the least researched in the literature. Kuhn (1992) agreed that further research is necessary to understand the thinking process: "It is in probing what it really means to think about thought that I believe the research I have described

makes a contribution, and it is here, I think, that important work remains to be done" (p. 205).

Theory-building, from a constructivist perspective, is not a collection of facts. It is a process of reconstructing existing ideas when presented with new information (Piaget, 1967). Whereas knowledge might be transmitted in facts and formulas, knowledge in the constructivist framework is about knowing (Harrington, 1994; Rodgers & Dunn, 1997). Knowing is discovering for oneself how one's world works, how things make sense to you, and how this happens.

The Purpose of This Study

An important issue that remains unanswered in the research of teachers' personal pedagogical theory-building is: How does a teacher construct a personal pedagogical theory? What factors affect this process and to what degree? The goal of this study was to design an investigation from the constructivist prospective that would develop an understanding of how the process of personal pedagogical theory-building evolved. Personal theory-building can best be examined on an individual basis, a case study of one teacher. Through a qualitative design and an interpretive approach to interviewing (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), I collected data, which included the participant's philosophy of how children learn and also gathered information about the participant's biographical background. This brought to light connections between the participant's personal pedagogical theory and her classroom practice, including her thoughts when making decisions about teaching and learning. I agree with Rodgers and Dunn (1997)

that statements about teaching and learning are inconclusive without observations. Therefore, videotapes of the participant interacting with students and colleagues provide a comprehensive body of data, as well as offering insight into the social elements of theory-building. The purpose of this study was to gain a clearer understanding of how a teacher constructs a personal pedagogical theory and to provide an awareness of the influencing factors that make this process possible.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

In order to investigate the experiences relevant to the evolving personal pedagogical theory of a first-year early childhood teacher, I focused on three questions: 1) What are the elements that comprise the first-year teacher's personal pedagogical theory? 2) What are the factors that strongly influence the evolving personal pedagogical theory of the first-year teacher? 3) What are the effects of the influencing factors on the ways in which the first-year teacher thinks about teaching and learning?

Faced with the challenge of understanding the thought process of an individual, I designed the study to encourage open communication and the best participant/researcher rapport possible (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Merriam, 1998). To accomplish a positive relationship and one that would provide the greatest amount and most meaningful data, I found it was important to demonstrate an interest in and understanding of the teacher's immediate surroundings. This task began with the classroom environment, but stretched beyond those walls to include an extensive number of areas. Contained within this realm are the physical structure of the teaching site, the demographics of the surrounding community, the educational perspectives of the site faculty and administrator, the teacher education program attended by the participant, as well as site, district, and state mandates pertaining to the first-year teacher's teaching assignment. Included in the state mandates, and unique to the first-year teaching experience, is the involvement of an induction committee (Oklahoma Teacher Preparation Act, 1995). It was necessary to meet at regular intervals throughout

the study in order to get an accurate picture of the reoccurring patterns of how the first-year teacher thinks about teaching and learning. To establish a trusting relationship between the participant and researcher and to gain insight into the working context of the first-year teacher, a qualitative case study was deemed to be an appropriate design.

The case study is used when an in-depth understanding and detailed account are required to examine a particular issue within its real-life context (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995). The case study reveals the particularity and complexity of a bounded unit; in this case, a first-year early childhood teacher. The implementation of multiple data collection strategies, characteristic of the case study, allows for a rich, thick description and intensive analysis of the thought processes and actions of the teacher: "The interest is in the process rather than the outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Through interviews, observations, journal entries, and member checking - all characteristic of the case study - the participant's thought process regarding teaching and learning, (as well as the factors influencing her thinking and elements embodying her personal pedagogical theory) were revealed.

Whereas understanding a process was the goal of this study, rather than generalization, nonprobability sampling was the method used in selecting the participant (Merriam, 1998). The participant of the case study is selected with a specific purpose in mind, purposeful sampling (Cresswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998). It was necessary to find a participant capable of providing insight regarding the

specific research questions, so naturally, the participant must be a first-year early childhood teacher. A second aspect of this study was the evolving personal pedagogical theory of the teacher. The best place to observe the teaching and learning decisions of the teacher is in the context of the classroom environment. In order to fulfill this purpose, it was necessary to find a first-year early childhood teacher working in a classroom setting.

I purposefully selected the case to be studied in order to gain the best understanding of the evolving personal pedagogical theory of an early childhood first-year teacher within the contexts of the teaching environment (Merriam, 1998). To accomplish this task, I decided it would be best to select a first-year teacher in the second semester of his or her teaching career. This decision was based on a number of reasons.

As a new teacher enters the workplace for the very first time, there exists an abundant array of unfamiliar paperwork, untried daily procedures, and new faces. During the first semester, the first-year teacher is inundated with a plethora of responsibilities: responsibilities of children, of teaching, of meeting regular demands of paperwork, and procedures. There are a number of initial meetings to attend, designed to help teachers get off to a good start, but often intimidating to a new teacher. After meeting the principal, the staff, the teaching faculty, the children, and the parents, there is the process of building friendships and developing relationships that begins to unfold.

The first-year teacher attempts to fit into the role of "teacher," realizing the awesome fact that she or he is "the" teacher responsible for the safety of the

students, students' learning, parent communication regarding the child's progress and behavior, and designing the best learning environment to reach the students' maximum potential. The emotional, social, and physical development of the students must be included in the curricula, as well as the academic goals. In addition, the teacher is responsible for the implementation of the curricula. This generally presents unfamiliar circumstances quite different from a practicum or student-teaching experience where responsibility is ultimately in the hands of the classroom teacher (Zepeda & Mayers, 2001). The first year teacher has a number of independent decisions to make about teaching children and how to help them learn best, which he or she likely has not previously made.

It is not unusual for an early childhood teacher to have a teaching assistant. Quite often this is a new experience for the first-year teacher. Along with attempting to understand the role and duties of a teaching assistant, the first-year teacher finds he or she is responsible for guiding the teacher assistant to be most beneficial in the classroom and deciding the best teacher/teacher assistant relationship possible to ensure maximum positive outcomes. This can be a very awkward situation for a novice.

First-year teachers are faced with personal evaluations and assessments that must be conducted systematically throughout the year. The process varies across individual states in a variety of ways. The particular state in which this study occurred requires a year-long methodical review implemented through meetings, observations of the new teacher's performance, and a minimum of seventy-two hours of mentoring sessions. The first year teacher is referred to as

the “Resident Teacher,” and the support team is called the “Residency Committee.” This committee consists of the site principal, a university supervisor, and a mentor-teacher. A mentor is selected from the teaching faculty by the site principal to provide guidance and support to the first-year teacher. It is the responsibility of the Residency Committee to recommend the granting of a teaching certificate for the new teacher (Oklahoma Teacher Preparation Act, 1995) at the close of the first year. Based on the Residency Committee recommendation, the Resident Teacher may be required to extend the residency year to a second year before receiving a state standard teaching certificate. Therefore, in addition to his or her responsibilities, the first-year teacher must meet with the Residency Committee and attempt to understand the role each team member will play in this year of teaching. The teacher must grapple with the idea that this committee has been initiated to support, yet evaluate, his or her performance as a teacher. In the mind of a new teacher, this may appear to be a contradiction. After all, the Residency Committee will make the recommendation as to whether or not he or she will receive a teaching certificate.

By January, when the first semester is coming to a close and the second semester is about to begin, the teacher has settled into the various routines and schedules common to the life of a teacher in an early childhood setting. Paperwork and procedures have become second nature. Even the desired room arrangement has taken form. Camaraderies have developed with staff, faculty, children, and parents. A working relationship has developed with the classroom teaching assistant. The responsibilities of the teacher and the teaching assistant

have had an opportunity to surface. The Residency Committee has met with the Resident Teacher, and the mentor teacher has been assigned. A number of meetings between the mentor and the first-year teacher have occurred. By this time, observations have been conducted by both the principal and the university supervisor and members of the Residency Committee. Through relaxed conversations and thoughtful reflection, feedback has been provided to the Residency Teacher regarding each observation.

At this point, the first-year teacher is feeling comfortable within the surroundings of site and classroom environments. The primary focus is now on the children's learning and the teacher's pedagogical approach to educating the children. Increased concentration is given to teaching and learning. The children are identified in terms of where they are on an academic and developmental spectrum. Temperaments, learning styles, and personalities have been observed. Peer relationships in the classroom environment have emerged and are now being nurtured. The first-year teacher is aware of the state acknowledged academic skills mandated for the grade level and has mentally set goals for each child. Decisions now need to be made for the best practice to ensure all the children will reach the expected learning peaks. The first-year teacher now has an informed idea of what will and will not be effective in terms of learning with this year's particular group of students. As the on-set of the second semester approaches, managerial procedures have been conquered and relationships are well underway.

The following criteria were, therefore, set in order to select a participant from whom the most could be learned. The participant must be working in the field of early childhood education defined as grades preschool through third; employed as a full-time classroom teacher; a first-year teacher in the second semester of his or her teaching career; and certified in early childhood education. To begin the selection process of a participant and, consequently, establish the setting, I contacted two principals whom I knew personally from two different school districts. Each district was located within a twenty-mile radius of my home and my place of employment. This was a plus if I were to slip over from my place of employment to the study site to observe a special event. Both districts were familiar to me, which was valuable as stated by Glesne and Peshkin (1992) and Merriam (1998). I was acquainted, on a friendly basis, with several principals and administrative staff members. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), locating individuals acquainted with one's research arena can prove to be beneficial. Merriam (1998) suggests that having a contact person will help pave the path for the study. I approached the two principals with the possibility of conducting my study at their respective sites. Pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentiality of all persons and places connected with and mentioned within this research study.

The first principal I spoke with, Ms. Benton, responded positively. I was familiar with the physical structure, the primary grade scheduling, and the demographics of the surrounding community because I had previously conducted a research project as a graduate level course assignment at this site in the

Thompsonville school district. The classrooms were contained. The daily schedule allowed the children to travel to other locations of the building for various activities, and the demographics offered a diverse student body ranging from low to upper-middle levels of socioeconomic and multiple cultural backgrounds. Ms. Benton said she would provide the necessary paperwork required to obtain study approval in this school district, at this particular site. However, Ms. Benton expected only one, possibly two, teachers to meet the research criteria.

The second principal, Ms. Allan, also responded positively to the prospect of conducting this research study in the Greenfield school district in which she was employed. Ms. Allan guided me to the appropriate chain of command required in making the necessary arrangements for my request. This brought me to Mr. Underwood, Greenfield's curriculum coordinator. He asked me to submit a proposal regarding my study. Upon receiving my proposal, Mr. Underwood discussed the matter with the Greenfield superintendent. The project was approved. Along with the approval, Mr. Underwood provided the names of the five early childhood first-year teachers and their respective site locations in the district. All five met the research criteria.

The Greenfield district provided a larger candidate pool than the Thompsonville school district, and I decided this would be beneficial in selecting just the right participant for my study. To begin the selection process, I distributed a brief letter to perspective participants (Appendix A). The letter was

intended to spark the interest of candidates and prepare them in advance for the phone call they would soon be receiving from me.

I made follow-up telephone calls to each candidate at his or her employment site. All five voiced an interest in knowing more about the study and agreed to a selection interview. In compliance with the University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board, selection interview information gathered was not used as data. The interviews were completed within a two-week period. The purpose of the Participant Selection Interview (Appendix A) was to explain the study, answer any questions the potential participants might have about the study, and look for the best participant/researcher rapport possible (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Merriam, 1998).

Although the academic year was well advanced (or possibly due to this reason), I found all five candidates willing to participate in this research study if they were selected. However, with the best participant/researcher rapport a priority, I selected Lisa, whom I knew. Lisa had been a student in one of the graduate courses I taught at a local university as an adjunct instructor. Due to a medical condition Lisa faced that semester, she was able to attend only a small percentage of actual classroom hours. Her commitment to the completion of the course was evident as she communicated with me by telephone and mailed finished assignments. I felt confident through this experience that she would adhere to the commitment of the agreed process of this research study. Lisa and I had developed a positive rapport with one another.

It was necessary to address the student/teacher interaction we had experienced and consider the possible influence my views on educating young children might have on Lisa. I considered the fact that Lisa and I had previously experienced a student/teacher relationship and gave much thought to the possible effects this might have on our participant/researcher relationship. Therefore, I made it a point to visit with her several times before coming to a final decision.

Another consideration I had was that Lisa, having been my student, might be swayed to try to teach from a constructivist perspective because I had voiced this as my preference. However, as she shared her experiences in the classroom and through our conversations, I realized Lisa was guided by her own thoughts, ideas, and style of teaching.

As Lisa and I visited, it became apparent that we had developed a compatible relationship. There was no evidence that Lisa thought of me as her teacher, nor did I think of her as my student. The positive rapport that we were experiencing led me to the conclusion that Lisa would be the best participant for this study. Lisa agreed to be the participant in this research project and signed the Participant in a Research Project consent form (Appendix B).

Participant

Lisa, in her early twenties, was a single mother of a four-year-old daughter. Her daughter attended a private preschool located in an adjacent city. This kept her on the go, and we juggled our interview appointments between her

daughter's dance classes and other social obligations common to a four-year-old child's calendar of events. Lisa was engaged to be married in the summer. She was excited about the wedding but said everything was planned and they were just waiting for the day to arrive. Lisa's outward personality was easy-going and calm.

Lisa's entrance into the field of teaching was slightly different from the traditional route. She enrolled in the university following her high school graduation. She did not intend to become a teacher, but rather become involved in social work. Lisa graduated with a child development degree. During one of her last practica, she was assigned to a kindergarten classroom in a child development center located in close proximity to the university. It was here that she became enthralled with teaching young children. She pursued this career by enrolling in the same university's early childhood education graduate program immediately following the graduation service. One year later, she received her Master's degree in early childhood education.

Lisa teaches four-year-olds at the Main Street Preschool and Primary Center in the Greenfield School District. Although she still believes this career choice was the best one for her, Lisa reports that she found herself overwhelmed with the numerous adjustments during the first semester. Now, as the second semester is beginning, Lisa is relaxed and comfortable in her surroundings.

Setting

Main Street Preschool and Primary Center houses children three years old to third grade. The three-year-olds and the four-year-olds meet in self-contained classrooms. Grades kindergarten through third are arranged in multi-age groupings: kindergarten/first and second/third, and also in self-contained classroom settings. All ages participate in special interest areas: art, movement, music, and library. The children walk to an assigned room at a scheduled time to spend 45 minutes in a "special." The three- and four-year-olds attend school all day Monday through Thursday, leaving Friday as a planning day for the teachers. Kindergarten through third grade students attend classes Monday through Thursday with a half-day session on Fridays.

This school is the result of the efforts of a small group of visionary educators from the Greenfield School District. After examining and reading research, they concluded a school dedicated to early childhood education to be the best learning environment for young children. They did not think only in terms of the physical environment, but also considered multi-age blends of children and teacher-designed curricula to be vital concepts to the success of this program. Jeremy Taylor, the principal of Main Street Preschool and Primary Center, explained that this was the first year of operation for the center, and many revisions would take place over time. He said the most prominent obstacle faced at this point was the lack of understanding of multi-age education by the majority of the teaching staff. Several teachers had been at this site for many years prior to the conversion into a preschool/primary center and had worked with

intermediate elementary age students. These teachers, Taylor reported, had limited knowledge of developmental needs and skills of young children. However, as I visited with staff and faculty, Main Street's teachers were definitely not lacking in enthusiasm and excitement for the future of this program.

Main Street Preschool and Primary Center School is located in an older suburb on the outskirts of a large mid-western city. Due to the unique purpose and limited grades represented at the school, families from around the district are invited to enroll their children after the neighborhood children have had an opportunity to be enrolled. The school accommodates 180 students. Low to upper-middle socioeconomic status, along with a mixture of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, is represented.

Data Collection

The qualitative interpretivist approach (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Rubin & Rubin, 1995) was employed in both the data collection and analysis. Interviews, observations, field notes, and Lisa's reflective journal constituted the foundation of the data collection. I conducted interviews with Lisa, Main Street Preschool and Primary Center's administrator and teaching staff, and two college professors teaching in the early childhood department of the university during the time-frame Lisa attended the program. The multiple data sources contributed to triangulation and the integrity of the data (Merriam, 1998; Strauss, 1987).

Strauss (1987) emphasizes the importance of using a variety of sources as data. Interviews and observations are the most common, but other types of

data, such as the participant's reflective journal, allows for another vantage-point in the data analysis. Strauss refers to this as "slices of data." Lived experiences recorded in Lisa's journal entries reflect her interaction with her environment (Creswell, 1998). The journal adds to the richness of a thick description of the process in which Lisa thinks about teaching and learning. To determine the accuracy of this study, it was vital to look at this phenomenon from a variety of angles. Only in doing so could the interpretation be considered meaningful (Stake, 1995). Looking at multiple data sources enabled me to see if Lisa responded similarly in all situations or if her thought process regarding decision-making in the classroom changed with circumstances. Interviews, observations, and journal entries were the best data collection tools to investigate this phenomenon. Member checking was incorporated as another means of triangulation (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). After data collection was complete, Lisa reviewed written material pertaining to descriptions of herself and words she voiced during interviews for accuracy. Recognizing the possibility of several personal biases was also significant. I too was once a first-year early childhood Residency Teacher and experienced a similar scenario. My approach to education was strongly constructivist in nature, yet I realized different teachers favor different approaches to teaching and learning. I made a deliberate effort not to compare Lisa's experiences and her viewpoints with my own. I often initiated the help of a colleague to serve as a sounding board (as well as checked again with Lisa) to confirm that my understandings were free from possible bias.

For more information regarding my educational biography, see “A Personal Story” (Appendix C).

It was important to me to collect data in a way that would be especially non-threatening to Lisa regarding her work and personal schedules. I decided it was best to take on the role of observer while in Lisa’s classroom. At first I just came in to visit and stay in the background, watching as Lisa moved about her daily duties. Lisa and I decided that we would plan future interviews and observation sessions at the close of the preceding appointment. We agreed that flexibility in terms of appointments would be an important aspect of this study. As it turned out, Lisa and I met once a week, sometimes twice, for fourteen weeks. We rarely had to cancel and reschedule any appointments.

An iterative design of interviewing was used to allow for ongoing analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This form of interviewing helped to “understand what the person thinks and ground the answers in his or her experience to give nuance, precision, context, and evidence all at the same time” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.40). The initial interview questions (Appendix D) were broad, furnishing ample opportunities for Lisa to respond with an assortment of ideas and explanations (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Further questions arose throughout the course of the interview conversations and created material for subsequent interviews (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Merraim, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The number of interviews required to collect adequate data were unknown as the study began (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), yet Lisa was willing and even eager to participate in an undetermined number. I was determined to

remain sensitive to Lisa's busy work schedule and the demands of her life as a single parent. We decided that the best time to conduct interviews was at the close of the school day after school was dismissed and things had settled down. We met to talk on each occasion in the quiet, relaxed atmosphere of Lisa's classroom.

There were five formal interviews with Lisa. All were conducted after the students had been dismissed. Our meeting place was convenient, a comfortable atmosphere for both of us. Interviews ranged from forty-five to eighty minutes in length. These interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Transcribing the tapes beginning the same day and continuing into the next day helped me; questions came to light for future interviews.

On other occasions, I had opportunities to simply stop by after school or on a Friday afternoon and visit with Lisa. One visit was to drop-off a "starter scoop" of worms because Lisa had indicated an interest in having her students observe worms in the classroom and I had access to a worm-bin. These visits lasted about thirty minutes and benefited in keeping our communication fresh and alive. While at the research site, I was able to initiate several informal conversations with teachers and Mr. Taylor, the principal. Classrooms, the principal's office, and walking through the hallways were the places where these informal interviews occurred.

As the data accumulated, I thought it would be helpful to my study to gain an understanding of the philosophy associated with the early childhood education teacher program Lisa attended. This information might provide an idea of the

impact, or lack of impact, of Lisa's college course content and her professors' pedagogical beliefs. I first secured the approval of the Oklahoma University Institutional Review Board, since this procedure was not a part of my original Institutional Review Board proposal. Next, I contacted the chairperson, Katherine Lewis, of the University's early childhood teacher education program. I explained what I was doing and how an interview with the professors in this department would give me an idea of the instruction Lisa received from her college early childhood education experience. Lewis said there were four professors in the early childhood department and all were there during the time-frame I was interested in learning about. She also informed me that two of the professors viewed the early childhood education program from a "traditional" perspective whereas the other two preferred the constructivist approach in early childhood education. I did not reveal Lisa's name because I was looking for a general philosophy and Lisa's name was irrelevant in this situation. I did know Lisa had studied with two of the professors, a fact which she had mentioned during the interviews. As a result of my request, I met for lunch with Lewis and Christine Casey, both from the constructivist persuasion. This audiotaped interview lasted ninety minutes and, as with other audiotaped interviews, was transcribed beginning the same day as the interview was conducted (see Appendix D for interview protocol questions).

Formal observations in Lisa's classroom consisted of two videotaped segments which "can enhance observation, ...videotaping is invaluable" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 51). The first videotape was recorded during the morning

and the second in the afternoon. I thought it was important to get a different perspective of Lisa's daily routine and the various decisions she would be considering regarding her work as a teacher. Lisa reassured me that she had no problem with the presence of the video camera in her classroom. However, the first taping session began with Lisa acting rather "formal." She appeared more relaxed as the taping continued. I returned without the camera on another day to observe and to see if circle time were presented in the same way as the day I videotaped. I found that both days were quite similar. I felt certain Lisa had not planned an extra special circle time for my benefit during that first taping session.

I viewed and transcribed videotapes in the days immediately following each observation session. Lisa and I scheduled a meeting the week after the video observation took place. During these video-interviews, we watched the tapes together in a very relaxed manner. Since it was the end of a working day, we enjoyed a snack as we watched the video. Lisa especially enjoyed seeing how her day in the classroom appeared on tape. On occasion, Lisa would ask me how I would have conducted a particular activity we were watching on screen. I guarded against taking on the role of the "expert," defined as someone with much experience in this area, and usually responded to Lisa with a question. For example, Lisa and I were watching a portion of the observation video in which she was conducting "circle time" with her students. All the children were sitting on a rug, arranged in a circle and facing Lisa. She was encouraging the children to raise their hands before she could call on them to speak. She wanted to know what I would do to get the children to raise their hands at circle time. My

response emphasized that most of the children appeared to be following her guidance by raising their hands and waiting to speak. Then I asked her why she wanted them to raise their hands. I found that asking Lisa a reflective question usually led to responses from her that were thoughtful and left her wondering why she took the particular action she did in her teaching. I imagined these times to be much like the “teacher as researcher” episodes recorded in the work of Cochran-Smith and Lytle (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993).

There were several opportunities for informal observation of Lisa in her classroom. Some of these observations occurred when I stopped by to collect or drop off her reflective journal. Other times, I simply came by to observe Lisa's day. I usually sat in a child-sized chair on the perimeter of the room.

Occasionally a child would greet me or ask what I was doing. For the most part however, the children appeared oblivious of my presence. Information gathered provided many field notes and additional questions for subsequent interviews.

During the fourteen weeks, Lisa made twelve entries into a reflective journal. Her entries often began with a description of a particular activity or event that had occurred that week. Lisa was able to reflect, question, and evaluate her actions and reactions to the classroom activities she initiated, as well as interactions with children, parents, principal, mentor teacher, and teaching assistant. Lisa's reflective writings in her journal proved quite helpful in discovering her thinking in specific situations.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was on going, beginning with the first interview, and happening simultaneously with data collection. Insights emerged throughout the study, guiding the direction of further interviews and observations, as I explored patterns leading to an understanding of how Lisa thought about teaching and learning.

Using methods similar to grounded theory, I began analyzing with the first interview and continued with each sequential set (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Coding was used to organize information, thus making retrieval an easier task. (Merriam, 1998).

Themes were identified by using a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a process used to look for recurring patterns within transcripts, field notes, and memos (Boyatzis, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Strauss, 1987). "A theme is a pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4). Data sets were coded and organized in chronological order so that I could detect patterns as they emerged.

As I moved through the data collection, I regularly returned to the research questions: 1) What elements comprise the first-year teacher's personal pedagogical theory? 2) What factors strongly influence the evolving personal pedagogical theory of the first-year early childhood teacher? 3) What are the effects of influencing factors on the ways which the first-year teacher thinks about teaching and learning? Each data set was then systematically examined and

organized into twelve codes. The twelve codes were as follows: 1) Mentor/Teacher Relationship, 2) Principal/Teacher Relationship, 3) University Supervisor/Teacher Relationship, 4) Teacher Expectations of Residency Team, 5) Teacher Defines Anticipated Responsibilities of Residency Team, 6) Staff/Faculty Interaction, 7) Educational Biography, 8) Teacher Expressed Views and Feelings of Children, Herself, and Curriculum, 9) Teacher Perception on Personal Learning/Teaching, 10) General Life Experiences, 11) Verbalized Personal Theory, and 12) Observed Personal Theory. Phrases describing the data were listed under the most appropriate code.

These codes were then collapsed into three groups which I have identified as themes/elements (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998). Themes/elements were continually checked to make certain they reflected the purpose of this study (Merriam, 1998). The themes also aided in answering the research questions pertaining to the evolving personal pedagogical theory of a first-year early childhood teacher. I employed direct interpretation in analyzing the data collected (Creswell, 1998): "...the case study researcher looks at a single instance and draws meaning from it...a process of pulling the data apart and putting them back together in more meaningful ways" (Creswell, 1998, p. 154).

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

What makes a teacher teach the way he or she does? What is his or her theory regarding teaching and learning? According to Tye, "...powerful patterns of schooling...are held in place by society's assumptions about what schooling should be." (Tye, 2000, p.3) Why do some teachers hold fast to the views prevalent in society that knowledge is mainly universal and transmitted from pedagogue to pupil? Yet other teachers open their minds to a variety of educational avenues and fiercely seek change, in order to reach every student. It cannot be ignored that just as individual personalities see the same event from as many different perspectives as there are individuals, individual teachers also have unique theories about teaching (Rodgers & Dunn, 1997). Lisa was no exception. Her biography and ways of thinking held a uniqueness all their own.

As I focused on analyzing Lisa's evolving personal pedagogical theory, I continually kept in mind the three specific research questions: 1) What elements comprise the first-year teacher's pedagogical theory? 2) What factors strongly influence the evolving personal pedagogical theory of a first-year teacher? 3) What are the effects of influencing factors on the ways which the first-year teacher thinks about teaching and learning? The findings are not thought to be generalizable, but rather provide a glimpse into the complex process of theory-building in one teacher.

In addressing these questions, I hoped to discover patterns in Lisa's thought process which guided her everyday decisions in the classroom and her planning of learning activities for the children she taught. Realizing, of course,

the impossibility of seeing the thoughts of another person, I knew our conversations, her actions, and collected artifacts would have to provide the insight I needed. Through the course of this study Lisa shared a number of things about her educational background and the journey she traveled in becoming an early childhood teacher; this information would prove extremely valuable in recognizing her thoughts about teaching and learning.

Lisa's Story

As Lisa and I sat together at a table in her four-year-old preschool classroom, she shared memories of her school days. Beginning as far back as kindergarten, her most vivid recollections included sitting at assigned desks, doing required seatwork, and listening to the teachers' lecture-style of passing along the essential facts to know in order to be a successful student.

School was a happy time for Lisa. She smiled as she recalled the smell of freshly printed ditto sheets with their wet, smearing, purple ink. She made friends easily and earned good grades: "I always did fine in school. I didn't have any problems." She attributed her high academic scores to her ability to follow directions and answer all worksheet questions correctly. "I was good at bookwork because that was what we always did." School protocol was predictable for Lisa from kindergarten to college, with the exception of her junior high experiences.

In junior high, Lisa was faced with two courses she labeled "creative." She defined creative as not being given specific instructions leading to the only "right"

answer. These two courses, home economics and art, required critical thinking and problem-solving techniques. Lisa felt lost. As she reflected on this time in her educational career, she stated she was especially uncomfortable with the situation: "I felt I couldn't do art and I didn't know how to sew and I didn't know how to do creative things, the fun stuff." She used the terms "creative" and "fun" interchangeably. She believed her uneasiness with creativity could be traced directly to a lack of opportunity, throughout her elementary experiences to think beyond worksheets, textbook questions, and one correct answer, a process she referred to as "boring": "...if you were going through school and all you ever did was workbooks, then you feel like you can't do anything else."

Lisa described her college years in much the same fashion as her earlier years of education, lots of bookwork and many lectures. However, the once dreaded "creative stuff" was now considered her most meaningful pedagogical tool. "I learned the most in (college) classes that we had to get out there and actually participate versus just coming in the class and listening to the instructor." She became visibly excited remembering observations of early childhood teachers at work, involvement in practicum assignments, and student teaching. Learning was no longer thought of as dull when she was allowed and encouraged to take an active role. Was she actually implying she had suddenly become creative, a critical thinker, a problem-solver? No, she was saying her education had become interesting rather than tedious: "...when I did my undergraduate practicum...I learned a lot there. It was fun."

As Lisa entered the field of education as an early childhood classroom teacher, how would she approach her responsibilities? Within the boundaries of her own educational experiences, she had experienced the wearisome grind of rote memorization and worksheets, as well as functioning as an industrious participant in classroom activities. She viewed the first approach as “successful, yet boring” and the latter as “fun and creative.” Would she attempt to blend the two or would she select one over the other? What factors would influence this decision during her first-year as a teacher of four year olds?

Elements Comprising Lisa's Personal Pedagogical Theory

It has been documented that individual students formulate a pedagogical theory prior to the onset of their involvement in a teacher education program (Rodgers & Chaillé, 1998; Schubert, 1986). I found this to be true in Lisa's case. Based on information gleaned from the data collected, I was able to identify the components contained in her personal pedagogical theory. The components seem to have been present prior to teacher education, and persisted throughout her first year of teaching.

Lisa's personal pedagogical theory included three interrelated elements: 1) learning is external, 2) the teacher transmits knowledge, and 3) following instruction leads to success. Each element can be traced through her educational biography and into her first year of teaching.

Learning is External

From Lisa's perspective, an external stimulus is responsible for learning. That stimulus might be a teacher, a mentor, an apprenticeship, flashcards, workbooks, or manipulatives, such as a collection of assorted buttons or counting bears. "I think you can show them, not just with unifix cubes, but with beanbags, adding and taking away and giving simple problems they can relate to, like candy or something like that." Lisa did not understand that the manipulatives in and of themselves did not teach mathematics.

"They can also learn from workbooks." While a student, Lisa reported, workbooks and textbook assignments served as reinforcement of lessons taught by her teachers. She did not understand that the workbooks, textbooks, and teachers were merely tools in the learning process.

Lisa failed to recognize the cognitive transformation occurring within the brain as an active and essential involvement on the part of the student. She did not acknowledge the internal reasoning imperative to learning, to making sense of the world. "For some kids flashcards might be how they learn best. Other kids may need more manipulatives; kids just pick things up." Lisa's ideas appeared to reflect the romantic ideology described by Kohlberg and Mayer (1972). Her belief that "kids just pick things up" is consistent with the romantic notion that learning and development occur through a natural unfolding. However, for Lisa, learning is external to the child; it comes from materials and expert adults. Thus, the cultural transmission ideology better reflects Lisa's theory.

Even as Lisa faced her own struggles in the framework of her teaching environment, she overlooked her own thoughts of what she believed to be true when making classroom decisions. Instead, she looked to external sources for her answers.

The Teacher Transmits Knowledge

Knowledge, as understood by Lisa, is a collection of facts, information, and instructions rather than a way in which individual people cognitively construct meaning from life experiences. She accomplished academic merit throughout her education because she absorbed, remembered, and recalled factual information provided by her teachers and followed their instructions explicitly.

On one occasion, Lisa and I watched an observation video of her demonstrating an art project to her students. She expressed surprise at the children's inventiveness in completing the activity:

I wonder how much they are listening to me when I'm explaining? Look at them! I told them today on their 'Q' we were making Q-tip Art and we're just going to do it on there and look how many just smeared it all over. I even did an example; I showed them!

Lisa thought her way of thinking about and doing this art project was the right way. She believed it was her responsibility to convey this "correct way" to her students. Otherwise, how would they know what to do in order to fashion a precise finished product? In this situation her thinking reflected the cultural transmission ideology, in which: "the educator's job is the direct instruction...." (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972, p. 453)

Throughout this study, Lisa continued to show her students the appropriate procedure to use on many art projects. Following a presentation to the whole class, she sat at the art table with the children and joined them by making her version of the task as they watched and tried to imitate her steps.

Art was not the only area in which Lisa exhibited a desire for the children to do things “right”. Raising and caring for a community of worms was introduced to the students as a class project. Rather than prepare a chart demonstrating the preparation of a worm habitat and let the children follow the steps to the best of their understanding, as Lisa voiced as an option, she created the worm-bin herself. Students were not allowed to handle the worms. She did not believe the children were capable of caring for the worms in the manner she believed to be best.

We looked at them (the worms) and they wanted to hold them, but I just don't know. I want to let them hold the worms but I could just see some of these kids pulling their poor bodies in half. So I don't let them hold them.

It was also important to Lisa to have the blocks put on the shelf properly. “I can get them all on one shelf. They can get them on two, but usually it ends up on three. But that's my fault. I need to show them.” She again was taking the responsibility for transmitting the knowledge: how to put the blocks up the “right” way. I was not clear on the urgency of restricting the blocks to one shelf, yet to Lisa this was a significant issue.

The teacher would transmit any knowledge needed to succeed in this four-year-old program. Discovery was only permitted during the designated “play-

time.” It seemed Lisa defined discovery as the freedom to choose and to use any available materials located in the confines of the classroom perimeters. However, I never witnessed any rotation of materials or addition of new materials to stimulate the discovery process. Nor was teacher interaction ever observed to facilitate discovery. The children would somehow learn from the environment.

Following Instruction Leads to Success

This element of Lisa’s personal pedagogical theory is closely related to a transmission of knowledge through the teacher and is evident in the above instances. For example, in order for the children to succeed in completing the prescribed artwork, it was vital that they listen to and follow Lisa’s directions. As noted above, this was the way Lisa substantiated success in her own educational journey.

When asked how she learned to teach, Lisa described it this way: “I pick things up. I picked things up when I was in the classroom with other teachers during practicums, student teaching and the lab school. I learned to teach by watching others.” Although Lisa preferred activity and involvement as a more enjoyable pedagogical method than the traditional methods she was familiar with, she still believed success was a result of following the direction of those in charge, including following the examples provided by experienced teachers. It was evident that she was entering the teaching field with the belief that those in authority, or with more teaching experience, possess the correct approach to educating students. She believed if she closely followed their examples and their instructions, she would become a successful teacher.

All three elements of Lisa's personal pedagogical theory were interrelated. They were set in place many years before she entered the early childhood teacher education program. She was not aware of her theory. There was no evidence of self-critical reflection. A possible reason for this lack of personal questioning can best be understood by examining Lisa's personal motivation, accompanying environmental orientation, and her response to decision-making situations in light of Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory.

Lisa's Environmental Orientation

Deci and Ryan (1985; 1996) encourage a close examination of a person's environment when determining whether an autonomy or controlling orientation is dominant. They believe that an autonomous individual weighs all options before arriving at a final decision. This was not the case with Lisa. Throughout her educational experiences and on into the first year of her teaching career, she closely followed the examples and directions of those she considered experts: "...you have all these people telling you what you should be doing, that you're trying to please too many." Of course, consideration must be given to other aspects which identify the autonomous and control oriented persuasions before coming to a conclusion.

There is a fine line between weighing the options - as with an autonomous individual - versus the struggles and conflict of the controller and the controlled (as with the control oriented individual). Probably the most decisive characteristic, according to Ryan and Deci (2000), involves an individual's

reaction to the pressure which is often experienced in decision-making. The autonomy oriented person examines the situation from multiple angles and decides what path is best whereas the control oriented person, after an internal struggle, will yield to the pressure and feel it necessary to comply with the source of the pressure.

The two areas in which Lisa's battle was obvious were in teaching style and methods. This was evident in her attempt to decide how to arrange her classroom—learning centers with physical and academic boundaries and limitations or open spaces free from contained areas with restrictions—and the direct use of a daily alphabet workbook program. A closer look will reveal how she dealt with the pressure to conform when faced with a challenge. Identifying her orientation in her immediate surroundings will guide understanding of how she made decisions and why particular factors had the strongest potential to influence her thinking. Recognizing her orientation and her relationship to influencing factors also contributes insight into the evolution of Lisa's personal pedagogical theory.

The College Professors

One afternoon I met with Katherine Lewis and Christine Casey, two of Lisa's graduate college professors. The reason for this meeting was to understand the primary goals these professors had for their students once the students graduated from the early childhood teacher education program and the extent to which each had influenced Lisa's way of thinking. There were five goals (which the professors hoped their students would bring with them into their

teaching careers) that stood out in importance: 1) think critically, 2) define personal beliefs, 3) develop moral autonomy, 4) recognize the complexity of teaching and learning, and 5) question what they as teachers do in the classroom.

In the field of education, the term “critical thinker” is used to define one who is able to find a solution to a problem by examining a variety of avenues. To Lewis and Casey, thinking critically happens by “...challenging their (the students’) thinking and not just teaching content.” They described this process as a transformation of the brain and the way in which their students think: “...critical thinking, that spiral of learning, continually drawing on what we know to what we want to happen, or change.” They believed that critical thinking would bring about transformations in beliefs and actions.

Lewis and Casey also saw tremendous value in verbalizing beliefs. They hoped to challenge their students to think and reflect on their actions and identify personal teaching goals. This would happen through opportunities to exchange thoughts, “...not us really telling them how to do, or what to do, but dialoguing with them. When we struggle to make clear to others what our own thinking is, we try to define what we believe, what we think, what we mean...which is really a growing experience.”

Another aspect deemed important was the development of moral autonomy, “...moving from critical thinking and the cognitive realm...into a sense of deeply respecting someone else and their learning.” They felt that there were teachers thoroughly addicted to job relationships, such as receiving accolades

from administrators, parents, and the community. Although such teachers appeared to be committed to the children, they were dedicated to their “stunning reputations with parents and other teachers – committed, dedicated, and hardworking.” The children were the means to positive recognition. To avoid this mind-set, it was important to communicate to students the need for moral autonomy and “...consider the impact of what you are doing and ask if your actions really demonstrate your respect and care for children.”

Enlightening students to recognize the complexity of teaching and learning was considered essential. A frustration was expressed regarding a message supported by society that teaching is simplistic: “I think teaching and learning is extremely complex. I think a lot of students leave teacher education programs thinking teaching is simple.”

It was believed by Lewis and Casey that quite often teaching was viewed as an easy career with plush hours. Books and magazines played into that trend of thought by offering “cute” ideas and specific directions for communicating learning concepts to students and easing the burden of planning.

The reality that novice teachers desired a formula to follow in order to teach at particular grade levels was of great concern to the professors. Visits from former students who were then teaching in classrooms affirmed the idea that many thought of teaching as “simple when you follow the designated steps.” Comments such as “I’ve only been in kindergarten. You didn’t tell me how to teach second grade” were common. It was hoped that those graduating from early childhood education programs would realize the intricacy of teaching and

learning: "Teaching really involves a lot of complex thinking. You may have never been in second grade, but that doesn't mean you don't know about the development of these children. You know how to teach them. It is theory in practice and we believe you can teach at all levels."

The last goal the professors had for their students was that of questioning, questioning "all the time" what they did as teachers in the classroom. Lewis and Casey felt that it was important to define various aspects of teaching which were personal to individual teachers through a process of reflective questions. "Let's define why you are in teaching and what is important to you; what is it that is important as we work with children?"

They believed that defining what teaching is rather than concentrating on a philosophy of how to teach would promote the development of a personal theory about teaching and learning. According to the viewpoint of Lewis and Casey, the teachers they had observed over the years, who remained stagnant in their role as a teacher, "never questioned what they did with the children; they never questioned what they did at all."

These two professors represented half of the early childhood teacher education program faculty at this college. Of the four permanent faculty members, Lewis and Casey felt confident that all would agree on the goals desired for their students. Had these goals become manifest in Lisa's life? Were these professors able to communicate the qualities they valued along to Lisa?

As I analyzed Lisa's thought process in decision-making, the five goals were the very areas where Lisa struggled most. She was unable to define her

personal beliefs. She might know what she wanted in terms of a physical environment for the classroom, yet why or how a particular concept was going to benefit her students she could not explain.

Personal reflection was the foundation of the goals identified by Lewis and Casey. Supported by her personal pedagogical theory, Lisa continually looked for her answers from external sources rather than examining her own actions and motives.

The Residency Year Committee

The University Supervisor. Lisa's encounters with her university supervisor were brief with little conversation:

She would come in and, I promise you, before I was probably five minutes into my teaching and she was observing, she had a list of things written out and was setting the paper down and she was through writing completely. She would just kind of wait and look at her watch until I was finished and got a break. Then she would say 'okay, here you go' and 'I'll see you next time' and set up the appointment.

Written feedback was minimal and not considered particularly productive. Each observation report repetitively reminded Lisa to observe other classrooms and keep current on ways to improve as a teacher. She would have preferred a personal note with guiding remarks: "There was nothing about my teaching or anything. I mean, there's always room for improvement."

No meaningful relationship ever developed between Lisa and her university supervisor. Even the final Residency Team committee meeting

produced little communication for the two. "...at the end of our last meeting and they all vote, she spent maybe three minutes. She said what she had to say and then she just kind of dismissed herself and walked away."

Lisa expected this individual to be an expert in the field of education, although this person was not an early childhood professor. She envisioned the university supervisor as a person in a position to instruct and point out needed improvements and changes that Lisa needed to make in order to become a successful teacher. She was surprised when this did not happen.

The Principal. Lisa was hired one week before the first day of school by the principal Jeremy Taylor. She was assigned as the teacher of the program for the four year olds and given a classroom in the main building. When Lisa entered her classroom for the first time, her teacher's aide was busy wrapping all the furniture, toys, and equipment in butcher paper. Taylor explained that "wrapping" was his idea. In the past, as a teacher of four year olds, he found wrapping to be a good way of introducing every aspect of the environment to the children in an exciting manner, creating an atmosphere of anticipation. Items wrapped included anything from the smallest art supply to the largest piece of furniture. Literally, everything in the room was wrapped. The plan was to have the children systematically unwrap all the "gifts." The thought was to provide an opportunity to explain the use and care of each item. The unwrapping process could take at least one week or more time if needed.

Lisa shared her feelings about wrapping: "I did the wrapping thing and ruined the first three weeks of school." Since her aide was already wrapping

when Lisa arrived at the site, she felt an obligation to continue the process. Taylor gave Lisa his explanation for wrapping, yet Lisa did not question or confront the feasibility of this project. Already overwhelmed with responsibilities of a first-year teacher and the arrival of twenty four-year-old students in five days, Lisa succumbed to the pressure she was feeling and spent many valuable hours wrapping equipment.

Several days into teacher preparation week, Taylor announced the completion of a new building. The building was part of the Main Street Center campus and was located across a small parking lot opposite the main building. With no maintenance staff available, Taylor assigned Lisa and her aide the job of transporting the entire contents of their classroom for four year olds from one building to the other. Thus began, what seemed to be, an endless number of trips lugging furniture and other equipment.

On the first day of school, moments before the students would arrive, Lisa was the recipient of another administrative decision. Taylor assigned Lisa's aide as the teacher for three year olds, leaving Lisa to receive a new teacher's aide that morning. Together they greeted each other and twenty four-year-olds for the first time. Lisa described the early weeks of her teaching career this way: "...I was clueless. I mean I thought, what had I gotten myself into and how can I get out? Where's the door?"

Throughout the course of the school year, Taylor rarely appeared in Lisa's classroom: "...he hardly ever comes in here. I would say my teacher evaluation he spent five minutes, maybe. I've asked him to come in and read to the

kids,...but he doesn't ever come." However, she reported that Taylor was always available in discipline situations with students in the classroom, and when Lisa was on duty in the after-school latch-key program "They (the students) respect him...they will (behave) for him, but not for me. I have no power, maybe they know that!" She identified Taylor as the authority-figure, the one in control, not only in relationship with the students, but for herself, as well.

The Mentor-Teacher. Two months from the time Lisa began working at Main Street Center passed before she was assigned an on-site mentor-teacher, Katherine Martin. Martin was a veteran teacher employed as Main Street's only kindergarten-first grade teacher. During their initial meeting, Lisa discovered Martin was in turmoil regarding her own abilities to teach a multi-age group of students. I, too, was made aware of this fact in a conversation with Martin: "I don't know how to teach kindergarten mixed with first grade...I can teach kindergarten or I can teach first, but I can't mix the skills together." Martin worried about the students learning to read and expressed a desire to start a letter recognition program at the four-year-old level. This way the children would be sure to experience letters before attending Martin's class. Lisa explained this situation and her response to Martin:

...she wants me to kinda start on the alphabet with them; she wants me to do it this specific way; she wants me to do this alphabet book every day and maybe that's not how I teach it, but she really wants me to, so I thought 'okay, I'll try it.'

When Martin approached Lisa with the letter recognition program, only a few weeks remained of the first semester. Valuable time had been lost if the entire letter recognition curriculum was to be completed.

As the year progressed, the alphabet book, as Lisa called it, had become a thorn in her side. She found this program to be extremely time-consuming in the delicate balance of an already overloaded schedule. Letters were introduced one at a time to the children during a large group session. Each letter was accompanied by an art activity which was designed to reinforce the letter. For example, the introduction of the letter "F" was followed by a finger painting project, and the activity for "Q" was dabbing dots of paint with a Q-tip on a piece of paper cut out by Lisa in the shape of a large "Q." Other program components for each letter consisted of a letter tracing worksheet and a worksheet involving coloring and cut-and-paste work. Lisa was concerned with the fast pace of letter introduction: "...they've gone through the letters so fast and we haven't gone back and reviewed." Individual letter recognition assignments were compiled into an alphabet three-ring binder for each of the twenty students: "These big alphabet books...are just about to get the end of me because there is just so much work! ...they (students) are bored with them and tired of it. I hate the book." Late in the school year, Lisa sums up her feelings regarding the alphabet book and her perspective of the mentor-teacher/teacher relationship in a journal entry:

We are still working in the alphabet book. We are on 'W.' I have to say that this book is getting to be exhausting. We are having to make too many letters each week. My mentor-teacher wants us to finish the book, but I

don't think the students are getting a lot out of it because we are so rushed. I can't wait for next year – at least I won't have to worry about pleasing a mentor-teacher.

Lisa clearly struggled with the practicality of the letter-recognition curriculum. She regularly voiced the pros and cons of the program in our conversations. The debate was not whether or not to teach letter recognition to the students. Lisa knew she wanted to introduce the world of print, including letters, to her students. The question was, should Lisa investigate a variety of means to incorporate letters into the classroom or simply comply with the demands of the mentor-teacher? "...maybe that is not how I teach it, but she really wants me to..." Again, she surrendered to the pressure of doing what another person believed to be the best choice. She considered Katherine Martin as someone she needed to please, someone with authority.

Martin and Lisa tried unsuccessfully to arrange regular meetings. Their schedules were conflicting, making quality discussion times difficult: "...well, two hours (from November to May) is probably a little exaggeration. But I haven't seen her a lot. She's been down here (Lisa's classroom) once and that's it...every now and then I see her and I talk to her...." When Lisa did have an opportunity to tell Martin about a unit she would be presenting to the students, Martin readily gave suggestions. She located books and resources from her large personal collection to share with Lisa. Lisa considered these instances helpful.

When asked what Lisa would have done differently if their roles were reversed, she replied, "Maybe help with materials...giving ideas...would have

come out and spend more time in the classroom.” Another area Lisa believed to be the mentor-teacher’s responsibility was modeling discipline in the classroom. “I often wonder what people do about discipline problems. I would try to help in that area.”

Messages Concerning the Early Childhood Learning Environment

Lisa’s Internal Message

Lisa experienced a year-long struggle regarding the classroom learning environment as she endeavored to define her strategies of room arrangement. During interviews, she consistently voiced what she was thinking during this ordeal, providing a glimpse of her thought process in decision-making. Lisa thought about her own learning experiences, which she described as “boring” and “not creative.” She remembered mountains of worksheets and hours spent memorizing flashcards: “...it was a good experience, it was just kind of boring.” She was determined to develop a “fun” atmosphere for her charges: “...if they’re bored to death doing it a certain way, I’m just not doing it.” This was her desire, yet, as observed with the alphabet book, this bold statement did not always match Lisa’s actions. In some instances, she felt obligated to concur with those whom she identified as her authorities.

In order to create a pleasant, enjoyable learning environment, Lisa believed that “play” held the key. She defined play as “ they move around and choose where they want to go...no assigned seats...freedom to choose activities....” Her first action in designing a room which would invite play was the

elimination of all but a few small tables. "I like less seatwork, so I like less tables. I would rather have the open space, just to play." Open space, in Lisa's thinking, was directly connected to play whereas tables and chairs were for the purpose of doing worksheets. The open-space design was the opposite of the setting Lisa had experienced as a child, where school life was predictable. Although she felt certain open space would stimulate play, she was unsure how to place the furniture to accomplish this task. "I guess we (Lisa and her teacher's aide) set it up that way just because we didn't know what else to do. We just sort of put things together and see if it works and then, this is probably the fifth or sixth arrangement we've had this year. It's better, but there are some things I still don't like." It was April, with the end of the school year fast approaching, and Lisa continued to battle room arrangement.

As she attempted to incorporate play into the curriculum, she had a difficult time clarifying the term "center," identifying the characteristics of a learning center, and determining to what extent, if any, centers would be found in her classroom. She explained that her first teacher's aide arranged the classroom in designated academic areas and, therefore, Lisa began the year with that floor plan. "Only because that is how she (first teacher's aide) had them, and as I went along, I found I liked the open space more and just set it up. This let them (students) take it (classroom materials) wherever they want to play with it. It's still kind of like a center, I guess." Lisa was indecisive in defining centers, but the urgency in finding a definition was apparent. The topic of centers was discussed during every interview.

Lisa tried to pattern her use of centers after a practicum experience where she observed an early childhood teacher working with a group of kindergarten students. "She did them (centers), but she didn't do them. I mean she didn't care if they took, (pause) she had them all set up, this is this area, but then if they ended up dragging something off she really didn't care. Hum, maybe center is not the right word." Lisa was attracted to the approach she observed in this practicum experience, yet she had little understanding of why the teacher had designed the learning environment in the way she had.

Lisa clearly was uncertain how to define her learning environment. She gave two examples of what she believed to be "freedom of choice" in learning through play. In the first example, the students took a tub of buttons from one shelf and transported them to the block area in a toy truck. Lisa considered this action a demonstration of play because the children were "actively involved." By "actively involved," she meant that the students were physically moving their bodies, as well as handling classroom materials. They had selected materials other than those available in the immediate location of the block shelf to use in their activity. Lisa described this event as "creative."

The other illustration of students being "free to choose and create" with classroom supplies was taking a tub of counting bears to the wooden stove to "cook." "Well, I like it more open with them being able to get almost anything it takes...much of our stuff is over here and they play over there. They do things I never would have thought with it. I don't know. I seem to like it that way. I don't want to stifle what they are doing." I asked Lisa if there was a particular reason

why she liked the students to have the freedom to transfer materials from place to place. "A reason why I just feel that way? I guess because they can be more creative with it." Lisa strived for a creative atmosphere, one free of boredom which provided opportunities for the students to develop critical thinking skills - both lacking in her own educational experiences. Why this was important or how to design such an environment continued to be a source of confusion for her.

The children regularly took buttons and counting bears to different parts of the room throughout the school year. Lisa's enthusiasm for the children's freedom to move materials to other areas around the room began to oscillate as the year progressed. She became frustrated. "The things that don't get picked up are the bears and the buttons, which I hate. They're everywhere! They (students) just don't pick up." Lisa expressed regret in not taking an opportunity to tell her students how to care for materials at the beginning of the school year. She decided she would take the time to instruct children in the care of materials during the first few days of school next year. However, she would use a method other than that of "wrapping" to inform the children.

A journal entry the last month of school emphasizes Lisa's frustration with the learning environment she had created. "It seems to be getting worse. I don't know if it's me or them or a mixture of both. I am trying to let them have more play time, but they keep hurting each other. They are driving me nuts!" To add to her confusion, Taylor and Martin separately advised Lisa on how to design an age-appropriate learning environment. Unfortunately for her, their perspectives clashed, and Lisa was caught wondering which authority-figure to follow.

The Principal's Message

Taylor preferred mobility of materials as opposed to setting limitations on where supplies must remain. "He wants them (students) to be able to play with something over here and feel free to carry it to another part (of the room) and create with that too...limiting materials to one area, he doesn't like that." Lisa interpreted Taylor's definition of a learning center as an enclosed area of a classroom housing a teacher-developed academic activity, and which Lisa believed he disapproved. Other teachers at the school shared with Lisa their observations of Taylor's classroom when he was teaching. They described his room as having large open spaces, which may have swayed Lisa as she attempted to create an open-space concept in her own classroom.

The Mentor-Teacher's Message

Lisa's observation of Martin's classroom led her to conclude Martin would describe a learning center in the same way that Taylor did, a defined space with a learning activity. "Her room is really neat...they (students) seem to like it in there...they learn. They go to their own little centers and they can't revisit that until they've gone through everything." Lisa had two four-year-old students whom she described as "brighter than the others." She felt they would benefit from the challenges of kindergarten, not offered with the four-year-old curriculum. Following Martin's suggestion, Lisa sent the two students to Martin's classroom each afternoon. "I send two of mine to her. The only thing they complain about is that they have to stick with the center that they choose. So if they make a choice and they don't like their choice, than they're stuck with it." Lisa voiced this

comment as a student-made complaint, yet she was not certain this was a negative point. "I don't know, maybe it's good for them to be stuck with something. It might work. Maybe I need to try that, I don't know."

Conflicting Messages

In the course of our interviews, the issue of centers consistently surfaced. Lisa recognized the conflicting perspectives of the principal and mentor-teacher. Both defined centers the same way, yet Martin supported the use of centers and Taylor did not. She did not feel comfortable in asking guidance from the University supervisor in solving her dilemma of determining the best learning environment for her students and for herself. Lisa was clearly troubled with the situation and did not know where to turn. It never occurred to her to question Taylor or Martin regarding their purpose or reasoning for their learning environment preference. Nor did she question her own understanding of learning centers. She tried to imitate the examples she observed which most closely resembled what she thought would meet Taylor's expectations. Her lack of personal questioning may stem from the fact that she tried to follow the recommendations of the authority-figure she viewed as the more dominant. Through the process of transmission, Lisa expected the principal to pass his knowledge on to her, characteristic of the cultural transmission ideology (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972).

I asked Lisa if she thought play could be incorporated into Martin's view of centers:

I think it could. But then the other problem is that I don't think he (principal) wants them (students) in centers. He says, 'no, don't do centers' and she says, 'oh, do the centers.' So I don't know what to do.

I asked her what her final decision was in this situation. Lisa's response, which clearly demonstrated her solution to her internal struggle with the pressure surrounding her, was to comply with the wishes of the principal. "I haven't done the centers because I know he (Taylor) really doesn't want those! But, I think it (Martin's version of centers) probably would work beautifully for the four year olds." Martin's learning environment had more formal structure, yet the students were not anchored to desks where they completed worksheets. Although this was a closer match to Lisa's life experiences as a learner and the new ideas she was formulating, she tried to emulate Taylor's lead.

Lisa arrived at the decision to follow the principal's preference, but she wrestled internally with her choice even during the last week of school. In our final interview, Lisa reflected on student learning in the learning environment she had designed for her students, specifically, identifying letter names.

I don't know why...we have a few kids that know their alphabet...that know the letters and there's one that knows the sounds. But for the most part...they know a few letters like the ones in their name. I don't know why it is. I don't know if I did more worksheets, they would pick them up...if we just sat down and went over it...just do the same worksheet every day. I don't know.

When I asked Lisa her philosophy of how children learn best, she confirmed the confusion she had experienced during her first year of teaching.

I had a philosophy, let them do this and that and explore and create and try to guide them here and there and give them the materials. But some of them aren't picking them (the letter names) up. And so then, do they instead need a worksheet, which would get boring every day? I don't know. I really don't know. That's what I need to think about over the summer, what do I want to do next year.

I inquired how she planned to find the answers to her problem. "That I don't know...maybe just...I don't know. I don't know where I'll find the answers. That's a good question! I hadn't thought about that. I just thought I'd start finding answers! I don't know." Consequently, learning in Lisa's thinking just happens.

Synthesis

As Lisa stepped through the doors of Main Street Preschool and Primary Center as a first-year teacher, her theory on teaching was on the verge of change. She believed in a learning environment that would prepare children academically within the boundaries of a classroom filled with "fun" and "activity." It appeared that Lisa was truly attempting to break away from the traditional teacher-oriented environment characteristic of her own educational background. However, as she tried to act on her new ideas, she was constrained by three interrelated elements that represented her personal pedagogical theory:

1) learning is external, 2) the teacher transmits knowledge, and 3) following instruction leads to success. She was not aware of her theory, which made her ability to function successfully in bringing about change a chaotic process.

Piaget's equilibration theory involves continuous movement between the states of cognitive equilibrium and disequilibrium. This is the process in which new information and conflicting ideas are interpreted and resolved through the balancing processes of assimilation and accommodation. New information that does not fit with current structures causes a disturbance or perturbation (Chapman, 1992; Piaget, 1995; Reiman, 1999). It is thought that, through these perturbations which appear as contradictions or gaps in the knowledge, an individual will reflect, experiment, and discover new knowledge. This thought process moves the individual to a higher level of organization and is a necessary component in theory building. Lisa's present theory was challenged by contradictions, as well as gaps in her knowledge, as she proceeded to incorporate play and active involvement into her curriculum.

Throughout Lisa's college courses, she had heard from her instructors that children learn best through play and active involvement. She interpreted play and active involvement to mean self-choice and physical movement. To Lisa, these concepts represented the opposite of boredom, silence, and sitting still at a desk doing bookwork. Play and active involvement eliminated rote memorization and repetitive "skill-drills." By utilizing play in her classroom not only would she omit boredom and initiate an atmosphere of fun, she would also be heading toward success as an early childhood teacher by following her teacher educators'

instructions. Keeping in mind that Lisa defined learning as getting the right answers in times of assessment, she attempted to fit play and active involvement into her current personal pedagogical theory, causing a disturbance in her thinking.

Play, active involvement, and the open-space concept simply did not fit with the teacher-directed curricula associated with Lisa's assumptions of teaching and learning. She could not assimilate the practices new to her into her existing pedagogical schema. Play in the classroom which leads to learning is built on the constructivist theory (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987; Kamii, 1985) and is much different from Lisa's perception of play. She appeared to lack understanding of why play should be incorporated into her curriculum. Not once during this study did Lisa reflect on the developmental abilities of her students and how play would benefit their learning. She simply wanted them to have fun, experience freedom to move around in a big open space, and "learn" naturally during play-time. Lisa's confusion about the role of play in her classroom, and the appropriate learning environment for her students, provided prime opportunities for her residency committee members to guide her to realize her personal pedagogical theory and build on her knowledge of children and early childhood education. Instead of finding support for her evolving theory, she encountered pressure from those in the best positions to influence her to conform to their ways of thinking.

It was Lisa's understanding that learning, such as recognizing letter names and sounds, would simply be "picked-up by the children." The toys and

games around the room served as external stimuli to promote learning. When the time came to evaluate the children's progress with a district assessment checklist, she discovered the majority of her students knew relatively few of the letter names. Lisa was baffled. Had she realized the cognitive quality of active involvement, or had she been guided to think about this possibility by a mentor or supervisor, she may have introduced a variety of language and literacy activities into her class environment and experienced further development of her pedagogical theory.

Confronted with the reality that her students did not recognize names and sounds of letters, Lisa immediately considered changing the external stimuli from the toys and games of the play-time to increasing the amount of teacher-directed time and requiring more daily worksheets. Rather than use critical reflection and become involved in interaction with colleagues to conduct an investigation of ways to incorporate literacy into a play environment, and pursue change, she reverted to what she believed and what was comfortable.

Not only did Lisa's personal pedagogical theory make it difficult for her to bring about a change in teaching style and method, her environmental orientation also created a roadblock. As mentioned previously, Ryan and Deci (2000) believe an excellent source in determining the orientation of a person, autonomous or controlled, can be found in the individual's response to pressure in decision-making. As Lisa grappled with the best physical design of a learning environment and the best practice for educating her students, her motivation was disrupted by a variety of non-supportive conditions. When caught in the middle of

conflicting messages, her reaction was to comply with the views of the person with greater authority, indicating a control orientation.

In this particular year, within the parameters of Lisa's teaching environment, the enhancement of self-motivation had been thwarted. Her commitment to become a successful teacher persisted, yet personal interactions with her Residency Team made it difficult for her to function productively. Throughout the study, interviews were filled with the same comment "I don't know what to do. I really don't know." Based on the investigations of Ryan and Deci, in non-supportive social conditions, "...it is clear that the human spirit can be diminished or crushed and that individuals sometimes reject growth and responsibility" (2000, p. 68). Lisa did not perceive herself to be a successful teacher at this point in her career. She placed the blame on external regulations ("pleasing too many people") for any indecisiveness she experienced her first year as an early childhood teacher. Without the interference of the Residency Team, she anticipated next year to be different, "I won't have to please anyone." Lisa's experiences with Residency Team members did not facilitate personal examination or positive growth of her personal pedagogical theory. The principal, the mentor-teacher, and the University supervisor were all instrumental factors influencing Lisa's personal pedagogical theory. However, rather than supporting Lisa to move forward, they managed to solidify the elements already present in her theory of teaching and learning. In fact, these elements had not changed from the day she entered the teacher education program; 1) learning is external, 2) the teacher transmits knowledge, and 3) following instruction leads to success.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Pedagogical theory-building is a complex process. An interwoven combination of factors influences the development of a teacher's personal pedagogical theory. Some factors may date as far back as the teacher's earliest days of formal education while others are present as a part of the teacher's daily routine. The factors most influential in the development of Lisa's theory of teaching and learning are highlighted in this study: educational biography, college course instruction, and the Residency Team. The Residency Team consisted of a university supervisor, Lisa's site principal, and a mentor-teacher selected by the principal from a pool of Lisa's colleagues. Lisa's responsiveness to the principal and the mentor-teacher is a strong reflection of her environmental orientation; she is control oriented. This is how Lisa views her environment, as explained by Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory.

Three research questions continually remained the focal point of this study: 1) What elements comprise the first-year teacher's personal pedagogical theory? 2) What factors strongly influence the evolving personal pedagogical theory of the first-year teacher? 3) What are the effects of influencing factors on the ways which the first-year teacher thinks about teaching and learning? In this section, I discuss the advantages I experienced by using a case study for this particular research project, what was learned about the influential factors of theory-building, how the findings of this study can be placed in the context of the literature and a brief examination of implications. Suggestions are made

regarding the generation of future research in the area of personal pedagogical theory-building of teachers.

Advantages of a Case Study

The case study allowed me to collect in-depth and personal data from the participant, Lisa. I was not looking for answers that would generalize how all teachers were influenced in the development of a personal pedagogical theory. Rather, it was my intention to gain understanding of how one early childhood first-year teacher thought when making pedagogical decisions and what influenced the way she thought about teaching and learning.

Thoughts expressed verbally by Lisa about her educational experiences provided insight into the foundation of her developing theory. Her journal entries and the conversations we enjoyed together contributed to my understanding of the challenges and frustrations faced by this first-year teacher. Observations and informal interaction in the classroom gave me many opportunities to determine if Lisa's responses to interview questions were consistent with her classroom practice. When a mismatch was clearly evident I was able to probe further, searching for a reason for the discrepancy.

I was directly involved with the research and personally examined the data generated from formal and informal interviews, observations, and journal entries. This put me in a position to become particularly aware of Lisa's struggle to make pedagogical decisions when overwhelmed by the conflicting messages she received from veteran educators. I was able to listen firsthand as she teetered

between the contrary advice of a mentor-teacher and a principal. Lisa's uneasiness and the pressure she experienced were regular topics of dialogue between us.

The affect of the researcher on the participant should be considered in a case study. I was at an advantage in being acquainted with one of the individuals listed among the perspective participants, which, of course, was Lisa. We were familiar with one another and found it easy to communicate. Lisa appeared to feel comfortable with the process and she openly expressed her thoughts in detail. This was made possible only by the rapport and trust that developed in our participant/researcher relationship.

Factors Influencing Theory-Building

As I listened carefully to Lisa and spent hours observing her in the classroom and analyzing the data, it became clear that Lisa was not aware of the existence of her personal pedagogical theory. This lack of awareness is not restricted to Lisa, but has been found in other research on how teachers think about teaching (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 2001; Kagan, 1992; Rodgers & Dunn, 2000; Tillema, 1997). Nonetheless, the choices Lisa made as a student and as an early childhood teacher reflected the content of her theory, which had been intact for many years. Lisa's theory comprised the following elements: 1) learning is external, 2) the teacher transmits knowledge, and 3) following instruction leads to success.

Educational Biography

The earliest factor influencing the development of Lisa's theory was her educational biography. The traditional teacher-oriented education she experienced, beginning in kindergarten, had set the stage for the formation of Lisa's beliefs about teaching and learning. Her own education consisted of a "sit still, listen to the teacher, and you will learn" philosophy. It was important to understand that Lisa connected learning with memorizing facts, getting the right answers, and doing the task correctly. This belief also stemmed from her school experiences. Although the philosophy of her education and her personal pedagogical theory were congruent, Lisa's theory took on a much different appearance.

Unmistakably, Lisa's educational background was visible in her first year of teaching. In Lisa's classroom of four year olds, she believed maximum learning occurred during the large-group-circle-time. Large-group time was a good example of Lisa's personal pedagogical theory in action and how the groundwork of her theory was rooted in her own educational experiences.

Large-group was a time for all children to sit still and listen to Lisa share information. This was the part of the day when, in her estimation, legitimate learning took place. By legitimate learning, Lisa meant acquiring the facts that were required of all four year olds by the school district administrators in order to successfully meet all state mandated criteria.

During the large-group time, Lisa repeatedly encouraged children to raise their hands for permission to speak. She admitted that her reason for this rule

was based on her own school experiences. Raising your hand to speak and sitting in silence were part of educating children, in Lisa's view. Sitting in silence indicated to Lisa that the children were listening to her speak, and, therefore, they must be learning.

In this example, the teacher is the external stimuli, which transmits knowledge to the students. By listening, the children will know exactly what is expected of them and learn the content taught. At the end of the school year when Lisa came to the realization that her students did not know the names of the letters, she concluded that more time should have been spent in teacher-directed lessons and follow-up worksheets. It was her perception that most learning occurred during the teacher-directed instruction. This illustration is representative of Lisa's biography.

Life histories, or biographies, have been identified as being instrumental in developing personal theories (Hollingsworth, 1989; Rodgers & Dunn, 2000; Zeichner, 1986). Uncovering educational biographies has the potential to empower teachers in the process of theory-building (Britzman, 1986). Even as Lisa and I frequently discussed at length her life experiences in school, she never appeared to make a connection between her past education and her current pedagogical beliefs. The influence of Lisa's educational biography had a strong hold on the way she perceived teaching and learning. Yet Lisa was not aware of the powerful impact her own education had on her thinking. Based on the literature reviewed here (Rodgers & Dunn, 1997; Tillema, 1997; van den Berg,

2002; Ziechner, 1986), without the recognition of a personal pedagogical theory, change of that theory will be difficult for Lisa.

College Instruction

When Lisa began her graduate work in the field of early childhood education, she found participation in practica to be enjoyable. It was at this point - college instruction - that Lisa discovered a different perspective on teaching and learning. This influential factor did not bring about a change in her personal pedagogical theory; however, it did open a door for her theory to encounter further development.

Lisa considered her lively role in the practicum classroom a form of active learning; in actuality, she remained entangled in the same "sit still, listen to the teacher, and learn" philosophy with which she was familiar and utilized in the building of her personal theory.

Although she was not necessarily sitting still, Lisa felt the need to be exceedingly observant, watching the experienced teacher so she would be prepared to imitate what she saw when her turn arose. She attributed this process to the way she learned to teach. Although sitting at a desk, listening to a lecture, and answering textbook questions were not involved, the steps remained unchanged. She listened and watched, applied information gained from her observations, and obtained superb marks on academic appraisals by replicating the methods of the model. Lisa believed that the closer her performance was to the actions of the teacher she observed, the higher the level of success she would experience as a student and as a teacher. In other words, if she listened to

the teacher, memorized what the teacher said and did, and followed the example precisely, she would experience success. According to Lisa, her exemplary evaluations testified that learning had transpired.

Institutions of higher education are a significant factor influencing what and how students learn in teacher education programs (Ziechner, 1986). The instruction provided and expectations held for students by college faculty must not be taken lightly. Teacher educators are in a pivotal position to guide preservice teachers in recognizing and considering change in their personal pedagogical theories. Liston and Zeichner (1990) stress the importance of this unique position: "If teacher educators are to enable future teachers to act wisely and ruminate over what constitutes good reasons for their educational actions, then reflection over and inspection of personal beliefs, passions, values, images, and prejudices should occur" (p.239).

The professors interviewed in this study established specific goals for their students to obtain and demonstrate once they commenced teaching. These goals were never apparent in Lisa's teaching. As teacher educators, Lewis and Casey believed the best way to assure continued reflection and personal pedagogical theory development was for them to serve as University supervisors to the first-year teachers who were graduates of their teacher education program. This, however, was not feasible. They worried that with all the practical difficulties and abundance of ideas and practices the novice teacher would surely face, and possibly be overwhelmed by, the utilization of personal reflection might diminish

or even vanish, resulting in stagnant personal pedagogical theories in their graduates.

In Lisa's case, the professors' fears appear to be warranted. While college level instruction had a significant impact on Lisa's performance as a student and a teacher, there was no evidence suggesting it led to changes in the elements comprising her personal pedagogical theory. Her theory remained intact. As noted in the literature, a personal theory is reconstructed through questioning and critical reflection of already held beliefs, as new information becomes evident (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992; Rodgers & Dunn, 1997). In spite of Lewis and Casey's goals this was not seen in Lisa. Perhaps the other two faculty members whom Lewis and Casey defined as "traditional" influenced Lisa with a greater impact than the instruction of the professors interviewed in this study. Because data collection did not focus on varying influences of Lisa's college instruction, a definitive conclusion cannot be drawn.

Residency Teacher Program Committee

It was in this first year of teaching that the Residency Teacher committee became an influential factor in Lisa's potential theory building process. As I began this case study, I anticipated further development of Lisa's theory due to the close involvement of her team. Instead, I found just the opposite.

The University supervisor was not a faculty member from Lisa's department at the University. There was no evidence this University person had knowledge of Lisa's teacher education program or what the early childhood faculty desired as goals for their graduates. The supervisor and Lisa were

unfamiliar with one another, as well as with their respective philosophical views about teaching and learning. The University supervisor spent so little time with Lisa that the two never participated in a meaningful conversation or learned what the other considered important for teaching and learning. A lack of genuine guidance existed. Yet, based on her assumptions, Lisa expected the supervisor to convey just what she needed to do in order to become the best teacher possible. She expected this person to be a knowledgeable authority. Notes from the supervisor saying "observe other teachers in their classrooms" and "read journals describing the latest research on teaching" were too vague from Lisa's perspective. She wanted detailed steps, a plan to follow that would ultimately enable her to reach her goal of being a successful teacher.

The University supervisor was in an ideal position to implement a support plan to guide Lisa in further development of her theory. However, there was no indication the University supervisor was cognizant of Lisa's assumptions pertaining to the education of young children. The supervisor had opportunities to bring journal articles and invite discussion on best practice with Lisa. Occasions existed, although either ignored or overlooked, to build rapport and guide Lisa through the open door presented during her college practica, and facilitate the evolution of Lisa's personal pedagogical theory.

The outcome of Lisa's relationship with her mentor-teacher and the principal was very similar to that of the University supervisor. Taylor and Martin missed numerous opportunities to assist the advancement of Lisa's theory about teaching and learning. Perhaps this was in part due to the vague guidelines

described in the Resident Teacher Program packet materials. Or possibly, a tradition of how to do Residency Team work has evolved in the school, or district, over the years.

The induction program of the state in which Lisa was working had been originally implemented thirty years earlier and read as follows:

The intent of the legislature is to establish qualifications of teachers in the accredited schools of this state through licensing and certification requirements to ensure that the education of the children of...will be provided by teachers of demonstrated ability. (Resident Teacher Packet 2002-2003, 2002, p. 1)

The only specific responsibilities of the principal listed in the packet were to assign a mentor-teacher to the resident teacher, observe the resident teacher in the classroom, and make a certification recommendation. All Residency Teacher committee members were to complete observation forms for two of the three scheduled committee meetings which convened periodically from the first day of the school year until the close of the same year. The only other sentence in the information packet which pertained to the responsibility of the members' involvement with the resident teacher stated that the committee was assigned to provide the beginning teacher with guidance and assistance.

All committee members were in a position to assess Lisa's capabilities as a teacher and had the task of recommending her for teacher certification. As a first-year teacher, Lisa wanted to prove herself worthy of employment. Revealing personal doubts and weaknesses to individuals with whom she had no close ties

nor a trusting relationship created an awkward situation. At one point, she suggested that a mentor-teacher be assigned the second year of teaching rather than the first year because they would know each other better by then. During interviews Lisa never mentioned an attempt by any of the Residency Teacher committee members to develop a mentoring partnership with her.

According to Tisher (1984), many induction mentors participate in the role of provider rather than as a collaborative member of the beginning teacher/mentor-teacher team. Those in mentor positions are often not adequately—if at all—trained to counsel the first-year teacher. This seemed to be the situation between Lisa and Martin. Lisa felt the need to “please” Martin. Martin rarely suggested helpful information or gave constructive feedback to Lisa. What direction she did give Lisa was to help Martin (e.g., ABC book) and frustrated Lisa. Reflective activities and professional discussions could have led Lisa to extend and deepen her understanding of teaching and learning. Sadly, such interactions never occurred between the two.

Feiman-Nemser (2001) points out that in recent research, attention has focused on induction programs, particularly the use of experienced teachers as mentors to new teachers. Little is actually known about the ways in which mentor-teachers guide and support beginning teachers. According to Zepeda and Ponticell (1996), novices are often confused about the mentoring relationship; wondering “what they are supposed to do” (p. 50). A mentor relationship only works well when the mentee and the mentor get along – where the mentee wants help from that specific person (Zepeda & Mayers, 2001). In

order for a mentoring program to provide valuable outcomes, Holloway (2001) reports, "The mere presence of a mentor is not enough; the mentor's knowledge of how to support a new teacher and skill at providing guidance are also crucial" (p. 85). In agreement with Holloway, Tisher remarks, "Too little effort has been expanded to develop tutors' skills in counseling and to select those experienced teachers with appropriate qualities to counsel and collaborate with new teachers" (Tisher, 1984, p. 120). This problem was evident in Lisa's case.

Had this organization of state politics, the Residency Teacher program, failed Lisa? Other than a couple of brief observations and reporting meetings by committee members, to what benefit had the Residency Teacher committee served her? Clearly, the potential and stated goals of this system were not realized for Lisa.

Environmental Orientation

The environment of the individual and the interactions that occur in it must be taken into account (Hargreaves, 2002; Zeichner, 1986): "...we cannot understand the influence of any particular factor...without also understanding the influence of all the other factors which are intimately linked" (Zeichner, 1986, p.9). It is not enough to describe the factual information, such as the length of the study, the time of year, and the number of children in the classroom. Thus, the content or substance of the program in which Lisa was involved needed to be defined if a true picture of her environmental orientation was to emerge.

As discussed previously, Lisa's response to the pressure of decision making usually led to compliance with the ideas of the person with the most

authority. Lisa's view of her immediate environment was a control orientation. I looked closely at the atmosphere of the school setting to determine if there was a similar feeling among other faculty and staff. Did a dictatorship exist at Main Street Center, which made Lisa feel forced to pattern her teaching style and methods after the ideas of the principal?

Main Street Preschool and Primary Center housed teachers with many years of experience in teaching. Not all had backgrounds or education in working with young children under the age of eight. Most teachers viewed their role from the lens of previous job assignments in intermediate grades, fourth through sixth grade. Taylor, the principal, allowed for variation in teaching styles and methods. He encouraged teachers to use district-adopted, subject area curriculum guides only as a springboard. Teachers were urged to develop supplemental lessons and activities. As were other faculty members, Lisa was left with the freedom to decide how to implement her vision of best practice into her classroom.

Each classroom had a unique climate, ranging from very structured and teacher-oriented to little structure and much play. Taylor acknowledged the differences, but through his comments to Lisa, she felt certain he favored a classroom with open space and many choices for the children. Lisa was confident that Taylor did not want to see teacher-designed academic learning centers in the four-year-olds' program. However, the choice belonged to Lisa.

Torn between the decisions she needed to make about room arrangement, teaching style, and the best methods to produce learning, Lisa's control orientation was evident. In each area of decision Lisa sided with the

person she perceived as having the greater authority. Her teaching style reflected the thoughts of Taylor. Working with the letter identification curriculum was to “please the mentor-teacher.” When it came to room arrangement, the idea presented to her by the principal was that of the open-space concept. Yet, she received no definite guidance on how to set up that type of a classroom. Where would she put the furniture? How much furniture should be in the room? Lisa never questioned how the open space would benefit children’s learning. As a result, she rearranged the physical elements of her classroom numerous times throughout the school year, only to end the year with a new floor plan.

The opportunity to think autonomously was present at Main Street Center, yet Lisa’s nature was control oriented. Her personal pedagogical theory was built around her environmental orientation. She wanted someone else, preferably a dominant figure, to tell her what to do in order to succeed this year as a teacher. When two people, both of whom Lisa viewed as authorities, expressed opposing personal convictions of the best learning environment for the program for four year olds, Lisa became indecisive and struggled to make a decision. Her actions were a clear operationalization of Deci and Ryan’s control orientation (1982; 1996).

In the Context of the Literature

Personal Pedagogical Theory

It was apparent to me, through the analysis of the data, that consistent with previous research (Rodgers & Dunn, 2000), Lisa’s personal pedagogical

theory was firmly established before she began her graduate studies in the field of early childhood education. As she endeavored to work her way through the necessary college coursework, she remained grounded in her theory. She attempted to make sense of information gathered from course content in light of her theory of teaching and learning. Further substantiating the research of Rodgers and Dunn (2000), Lisa attempted to make classroom decisions in the same way: through the lens of her personal theory of teaching and learning.

At the beginning of this study (and before I made my first visit to Lisa's classroom), I had preconceived notions of what Lisa's classroom environment would be like, knowing that she had graduated from an early childhood teacher program which emphasized the constructivist perspective of learning for young children. During a conversation prior to my first visit to Lisa's classroom, it was revealed that she had graduated with honors. I inferred that to mean Lisa had a strong understanding of the constructivist approach to education and was able to apply that understanding to her classroom environment. I expected to see children involved in activities requiring problem-solving to promote cognitive development, and which encouraged the development of positive social skills. I did observe children at play and interacting socially with one another. However, there were no visible activities which would necessarily challenge the cognitive growth and development of the students. Instead, Lisa was in the midst of trying desperately to remedy this dilemma.

I was unaware of her personal pedagogical theory as this study began. It was my feeling that she probably possessed a solid understanding of the

developmental characteristics of young children and was able to incorporate this knowledge into the design of the learning environment. Again, I based my assumption on her high academic standing at the graduate level.

Once I became engaged in analyzing the data, I realized how completely mistaken I was regarding Lisa's theory. Multiple data sources were imperative in order to arrive at an accurate conclusion. This supports Rodgers and Dunn's (2000) argument that it is impossible to accurately know a teacher's personal theory about teaching and learning without also observing that teacher as he or she interacts with students and colleagues. It is not enough to simply interview the teacher and attach a theory to that person, based solely on interview responses.

Incorporating observations and journal entries into the data collection, in addition to interviews, proved invaluable. Observing Lisa in the classroom and reading her journal helped me to know which terms, such as "actively involved" and "play" needed further defining from Lisa so I could better understand her meaning. Without a more in-depth explanation, it might be assumed that a term has a universal meaning; therefore, we share the same interpretation.

The inaccurate assumptions I made about Lisa proved to be revealing examples of the same errors many teacher educators make about their students. How many times do teacher educators under- or over-estimate the understanding of particular concepts by their students? Assumptions are made, often founded on test scores or other academic performance, about preservice teacher beliefs. Lisa was obviously accomplished at being carefully attuned to

the directions of those providing examples and instruction. She was able to imitate activities that paralleled the examples she observed. She was able to follow instructions with precision and answer test questions appropriately. As Lisa did this, she was acting on her personal pedagogical theory. She did not have a full understanding of the constructivist concepts her college instructors had attempted to communicate, yet she had learned to use the correct terminology to give the impression her understanding was complete. Thorough discussion and frequent observation were necessary to determine these nuances in Lisa's thought process. Interestingly, in her study of teachers as decision-makers, Bennett (1992) suggested that theoretical schemas of teaching emerged in her participants because they were using a common language related to the pedagogical knowledge presented to them in a summer program. However, in Lisa's case, the use of popular teaching terminology alone was not an accurate indicator of her understanding or enactment of pedagogical concepts.

As Lisa attempted to apply terms, such as "play" and "active learning" to classroom practice, she faced a difficult challenge. The cultural transmission ideology (see Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972) characteristic of her personal pedagogical theory—learning is external and teachers' transmit knowledge—clashed with her understanding of "play" and "active learning." Her understanding of these two concepts was likely colored by her college coursework in constructivist theory. Lisa seemed to interpret the concepts of play and active learning as magical happenings—children would just "pick things up" if she placed

materials on the shelves and allowed children access to them. This line of thinking resembles the romantic ideology, first presented by Rousseau (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972) and later represented by Gesell's maturationist theory—children develop innately and time and opportunity within a positive environment are all they need to do so (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987; Gesell & Ilg, 1949).

Rather than understanding play and active learning through the lens of constructivist theory Lisa combined the two ideologies of cultural transmission and romanticism, as she tried to make sense of these concepts. Lisa incorporated teacher-directed activities—cultural transmission—when she was teaching and hoped an “unfolding” (romanticism) would occur when the children were physically involved in a play-time. Her struggles are characteristic of the misapplication of recommended teaching practices common in the early childhood field (see Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Facilitating Transformation of Personal Pedagogical Theories

Not only must teacher educators be aware of the existence of personal pedagogical theories, they must be willing and able to encourage and challenge students to identify their personal theories. As stated by Tillema (1997), “the beliefs and perspectives...teachers have are not necessarily explicit in nature. If conceptual change is to be achieved, these beliefs have to be made explicit” (p. 4). According to Tillema (1997), neither change, nor growth, can develop if personal theories are not recognized. These notions reflect what I witnessed with Lisa: no recognition of nor change or growth in her personal pedagogical theory.

The Residency Teacher committee is designed as a support system “assigned to give guidance and assistance to the beginning teacher.” (Resident Teacher Packet 2002-2003, 2002, p. 1) A key responsibility of each committee member, and specifically the mentor-teacher, is to serve as a mentor to the resident teacher. A skilled mentor could have stimulated critical reflective thinking. Lisa was on the verge of inquiry. She wondered why her classroom was not functioning as the learning environment she had hoped for. A knowledgeable mentor could have helped Lisa investigate possible causes and solutions through systematic personal critical reflection as described by Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992).

As Lisa faced uncertainty and disequilibrium, she reverted to her original theory rather than weigh options with confidence in her ability to problem solve. There were many opportunities for those assigned to Lisa’s residency year to come to her aid, not to provide her with the answers, but to support her search for meaning in the process of theory-building. Unfortunately this never occurred.

Summary and Implications of the study

The issues examined above lead to several implications of this study. First, the utilization of multiple data sources is imperative to really know what a teacher is thinking and doing. The need to use multiple data sources applies to both researchers and people helping teachers become better at what they do. Secondly, higher education (teacher education) may not automatically be a critical factor in shaping a teacher’s theory about teaching and learning. If higher ed is to have an impact on personal theory-building it must include purposeful

experiences requiring examination of, and potentially change in theories about teaching and learning. The powerful influence of Deci and Ryan's idea of environmental orientation could be instrumental in bringing about change from a control orientation to an autonomous orientation in many teachers. A key to guiding change is critical reflection on the typical practices of the teacher.

Conclusion

All teachers do not necessarily think about teaching and learning in the same way Lisa did. Most likely they will not have a personal pedagogical theory identical to that of Lisa. A personal pedagogical theory is built on life experiences and, therefore, each person's is unique. Creating narrative accounts, explaining metaphors, and engaging in research on one's own teaching (teachers as researchers) are all beneficial to theory-building. However, each requires purposeful personal reflection on the part of the teacher. The teacher must want to know what he or she is thinking about teaching and learning, and perhaps why.

In Lisa's case there was no intentional or systematic approach of inquiry. Yet a personal pedagogical theory was present. Her theory had evolved over time and was consistent with her educational biography. In order for change and further development to occur, Lisa must become conscious of her pedagogical beliefs, and make a conscious effort to examine them.

It is my hope that the findings of this study will support the understanding that preservice teachers enter the arena of teacher education with a theory intact.

"Understanding ... teachers' individual theories and how they influence their learning will inform and hopefully strengthen the teacher education practice" (Whitbeck, 2000, p. 129). My intention is to contribute to the literature regarding teachers' construction of personal theories of teaching and learning by recognizing the significance of teachers' thought processes as a way of knowing about theory-building and interpreting their practice.

In addition, there are many studies regarding the effectiveness of mentoring novice teachers, yet few examine the mentor-teacher program and how this plan is actually being implemented and assessed in schools. As seen by Lisa's experience, the Residency Team existed according to politically structured requirements and met formally as state-mandated. However, this team never accomplished the goal originally intended by the State Department of Education. More investigation of the various ways Residency Teams function and impact beginning teachers is needed.

The complexity of factors influencing pedagogical theory-building, the environmental orientation of first-year teachers, and how each effects the development of a personal pedagogical theory need further exploration as well. Our understanding of the thought processes of teachers is still quite rudimentary. This study helps expand the relatively limited body of work examining those thought processes.

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Appendix A

Letter to Perspective Participants

Dear _____,

It is my pleasure to inform you that you have been selected as a possible participant for a research project to be conducted this spring. No, this is not a contest and I am not a salesperson. However, it is my hope that I will spark your interest and schedule a selection interview with you soon.

My name is Mary McCoy and I am a doctoral student at a University located in the vicinity of your place of employment. I plan on beginning a research project involving an early childhood first-year teacher during the current school semester. This project includes audiotaped interviews and videotaped observations in your classroom, should you be selected and agree to participate.

You will receive a telephone call from me at your school site. If you are interested in knowing more about this study, we will schedule a selection interview to occur in the near future. Detailed information regarding this research project will be provided at the time of the selection interview. In no way will your agreement to meet for the selection interview bind you to participate in this study.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Mary McCoy, M. Ed.
Doctoral Student, Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum

Participant Selection Interview Outline

- I. Purpose of the Participant Selection Interview is:**
 - A. Explain the study to potential participants**
 - B. Answer any questions potential participants might have about the study**
 - C. Get an idea of possible participant/researcher rapport**
- II. Researcher's questions to be answered during the Participant Selection Interview are:**
 - A. Are potential participants comfortable being audiotaped and videotaped?**
 - B. Are potential participants able to agree to the time commitment involved in this study?**
 - C. Do potential participants understand the reflective journal task?**
 - D. Are potential participants willing to take part in this study without reservation?**

Appendix B

The University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus
Consent to Participate in a Research Project

Factors Influencing the Personal Pedagogical Theory of a First Year Early Childhood
Teacher

Mary K. McCoy, M.Ed., Principal Investigator
Loraine Dunn, Ph.D., Faculty Sponsor

This study examines how early childhood teachers create personal theories about learning and teaching. There is a need to understand teachers' development of personal pedagogical theories and how they make decisions in the classroom. This project is designed to help teacher educators meet the needs of students preparing to become early childhood teachers.

If you decide to participate in this project, you will be asked to participate in two to three interview sessions which will last approximately 60 minutes each. These interviews will be audiotaped to ensure the information is gathered as accurately as possible. I will make videotaped observations in your classroom two to three times during the project.

I see no risks of participation in this project for you. Your participation will greatly help teacher educators provide the best instructional programming directed specifically for early childhood education students. You may gain insight about your teaching from participating in the study through discussing your life-long education experiences and the way in which you think about teaching and learning.

Your participation in this project is strictly voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty at your place of employment or otherwise. You may withdraw at any time without penalty as well. All information from this project, including interviews, audiotapes, videotapes and journal entries will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. A pseudonym will be given for you and your current setting so real names and locations will not be known.

If you have any questions about this project please contact me at: (405) 632-5622, or my University supervisor Dr. Loraine Dunn at: (405) 325-1509. If you have any questions pertaining to your rights as a research participant please contact the University Office of Research Administration at: (405) 325-4757.

Mary K. McCoy, M.Ed.
Doctoral Student, Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum

CONSENT STATEMENT

I agree to take part in this research project. I know what I will be asked to do and that I can stop at any time.

Signature

Date

I give my permission for audiotaping and videotaping.

Signature

Date

Appendix C

Becoming a Teacher – a Personal Story

In 1952, when I was four years old, I shyly entered the kindergarten classroom for the first time. That room looked so inviting with its piano, the miniature housekeeping area, and the large rug where we gathered to sing. There was also another side of what seemed in my young eyes an immense room. Three long tables stretched across the floor space, taking up nearly half the room. Child-sized chairs were arranged on one side of each table, facing the front of the room where the teacher's desk was situated. My teacher, Mrs. Sargent, read to us every day. She sang to us and taught us the importance of being kind to one another. I enjoyed kindergarten and decided that year I would become a teacher when I grew up.

As the years passed, school became increasingly difficult for me. My young age and small stature not only caused havoc in my academic progress, it caused a struggle in my social world as well. Learning to read was a painfully slow experience and running a mile during physical education class found me far behind the other children. My difficulties as a student intensified with each grade level. Every class, with the exception of art and home economics, had the same format: enter the classroom, sit in a teacher-assigned seat, listen to the teacher lecture, open the textbook, do the assigned work within the required time, and, above all, do not speak unless you have received permission to do so from the teacher. These strategies made the six-hour school day a torturous experience for me, a struggling student unable to complete many assignments in the necessary time frame.

All teachers appeared the same in many ways. Few ventured out of the “teacher-mold.” The teacher was in control, the authority-figure. Knowledge was universal and the teacher knew the correct answers. Children learned all things through transmission; the teacher stood before the students and conveyed everything a student needed to know to become successful in school and a productive member of the community.

School never became any easier for me, yet I managed always to squeeze by and advance to the next grade level. My mother’s words of frustration still ring clear in my ears: “If you do not do better, I am going to tell them to hold you back.” I began each school year with a determination to “make-it.” The first eight weeks of school, which were the review weeks of lessons learned the preceding year, held my greatest academic accomplishments. I finally understood last year’s lessons only to be confronted with seven months of new work. Each year closed in disappointment.

One might conclude that I would flee as far as possible from any environment resembling academic achievement. However, this was not the case. My kindergarten desire to teach never faded, and my desire to learn remained alive.

Throughout my elementary years, I imitated my teachers and practiced my teaching skills on my younger sister, friends from the neighborhood, and every doll and stuffed animal I could muster. I remained faithful to my dream of becoming a teacher and my passion to “make-it” in the world of academia.

As a result, I graduated from college as an early childhood teacher and entered the teaching field as a kindergarten teacher. My dream had come true. I was as driven to become the best teacher possible as I had been in becoming a teacher. I modeled my approach to teaching after the educators I had been taught by over the years, including college professors. I was not the one in control and would transmit knowledge to the students.

However, an interesting matter of concern became apparent. It did not take long for me to recognize the struggling students and memories of my school days flooded my mind. I decided no child would suffer and flounder the way I had in a sea of learning while in my classroom. Thus began for me, perturbations rocking my pedagogical schema, continual reflections on my preconceived notions regarding teaching and learning, and a change that would shake my theory of best practice.

The number of teachers who have crossed my path during my years as an educator have been many. Some were searching for the best ways to teach their students; others were content to live each year in the classroom as a carbon copy of previous years. Some teachers saw the children as “fitting the mold” or just not fitting in at all while others saw the mold changing to fit the uniqueness of each student. I wanted to know why this phenomenon occurs.

I realized my biography was only one perspective on an evolving pedagogical theory. Yet, it was important to be aware of my views and possible bias. As I analyzed the data collected in this case study, I remained open to the thought that personal theories are just that...personal. Teachers bring with them

into the profession of education their own life experiences, points of view, and formation of ideas.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol Questions

1. Some teachers say they chose teaching as a career because they love children. What would you say to them?
2. Why did you become a teacher?
3. There are teachers who say they learned to teach from their college teacher education program professors. What would be your response to that comment?
4. What do you think the ideal early childhood teacher education program would be like?
5. What would you say is the way children learn best?
6. Some people believe the only way to learn addition and subtraction facts is through drill and memorization. What would you say to them?
7. When you attended elementary school, how did you learn addition and subtraction facts?
8. Was this method (answer to #7) successful for you?
9. What do you think is the best way of evaluating a student's academic progress?
10. How is your students' work evaluated?
11. Suppose I am planning an early childhood classroom activity. What would I do?
12. Is there a time you would have responded differently to this question (question #11)?
13. What do you think the ideal early childhood classroom would be like?
14. Teachers sometimes develop a vision of the ideal classroom and that vision never changes over time? What do you think?
15. Would you say teaching a group of young children is different from what you expected?

Interview Protocol Questions for the Professors

1. What courses are offered at your institute which are specifically designed for the early childhood teacher education program?
2. Some teachers believe courses involving practica as the greatest influence on their current classroom practice. How would you respond to them?
3. Suppose you are visiting the classroom of a first-year teacher who recently graduated from your institution's early childhood teacher education program. What would you expect to see?
4. What do you think the ideal early childhood teacher education program would look like?
5. What do you think the ideal early childhood classroom would look like?