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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

The First Five Years: Novice Teacher Beliefs, Experiences, and
Commitment to the Profession

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor in Education

in

Teaching and Learning

by

Heather Ann Michel

Committee in charge:

Professor Alison Wishard Guerra, Chair
Professor Tom Humphries
Professor James Levin

2013

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The Dissertation of Heather Ann Michel is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2013

Dedication

My dissertation is dedicated to my family, and especially my husband, my son and my daughter. I hope that mom's hard work will serve as an example for your own goals and aspirations.

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Novice Teacher Attrition

Novice Teacher Commitment

The Novice Teacher Experience

Abstract of The Dissertation

The First Five Years: Novice Teacher Beliefs, Experiences and Commitment to the Profession

by

Heather Ann Michel

Doctor of Education in Teaching and Learning

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Professor Alison Wishard Guerra, Chair

Novice teacher attrition is a valid concern for public education. Some studies have found that 40-50% of novice teachers will leave the profession before they reach their fifth year of teaching. Previous literature states that novice teachers leave because of job dissatisfaction, school conditions and feeling ineffective with their students. This study uses a mixed methods design to explore novice teacher commitment by examining four novice teacher domains: teacher beliefs, pre and early teaching experiences, feelings of effectiveness and community context. Three research questions were created to guide this exploration: (1) what are novice teacher beliefs about teaching and how do they relate to feelings of effectiveness and school context? (2) What are novice teachers' pre and early teaching experiences and what is their relationship to teacher beliefs and feelings of effectiveness? And (3) how do novice teachers talk about their commitment to the profession and is their commitment related to their beliefs or experiences? Ecocultural

theory and the efficacy construct were utilized to better understand how novice teachers develop feelings of effectiveness and how the teaching context affects the aforementioned novice teacher domains. The mixed methods approach included three key data sources: a teacher survey, semi-structured interviews, and school documents. All three sources were analyzed looking for common patterns among data points. Qualitative and quantitative findings indicate that teaching context is of principal importance and serves as a mediator between the novice teacher and her beliefs, feelings of effectiveness, and commitment to the teaching profession. Additionally, qualitative analysis indicated that novice teachers are more likely to remain in the profession past their first five years if given probationary or permanent status and the appropriate school structural supports. Among the most critical structural supports are protected collaboration time, administrative support, and support staff support. Recommendations include providing novice teachers with weekly protected collaboration time, creating positive interactions between novice teachers and their administration, and supplying novice teachers with school support staff. These recommendations all support the novice teacher in their feelings of effectiveness in the classroom and subsequent commitment to the teaching profession.

Chapter I: Introduction

I heard somebody say once, “My gosh, the kids nowadays and their behavior!” I can’t imagine in forty years what it will be like, feral children just coming in. “You have parents, is anybody teaching you anything at home?” There are some years where I think, “Does anybody talk to you at home?” So I’m thinking in forty years, “Oh man, I got to get to plan B or I don’t know if I can do it.”—Eden, interview participant

The attrition rate of novice teachers is a valid concern for public education. Some studies have found that within the first five years of teaching 40-50% of novice teachers will leave the teaching profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple & Olsen, 1991). This number is startling and is cause for concern for many reasons. First, novice teacher turnover affects student achievement (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). For example, when novice teachers leave a school, schools scramble to fill their vacancies. Teachers with less experience and instructional knowledge usually fill these positions. Inexperienced teachers typically have lower student academic gains among their students (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). Second, novice teacher attrition creates an older age profile of those teachers that remain in teaching and lowers school morale (MacDonald, 1999). This is especially true for at risk schools that have an exceptionally high rate of teacher turnover (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). Finally, the cost of teacher attrition is staggering. For instance, Barnes, Crowe, and Schaefer (2007) found that the total cost of turnover in the Chicago Public Schools is estimated to be over \$86 million per year. These costs are largely due to the recruitment, hiring, and training of new teachers. Concerns about novice teacher turnover have helped to form a large body of research that explores the reasons behind novice teacher attrition (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Evans & Tribble, 1986; Smith, 2007; Shen, 1997). Because novice

teacher retention is such a key component of school and student success, it deserves further discussion.

Why do New Teachers Leave the Profession?

It was so much work though, and so time consuming that I didn't know if I was going to be teaching for the long term. I wanted to finish what I had started so I committed myself to two years, and then I thought, I need to re-evaluate in two years. Because if this is the way it is going to be forever then maybe this isn't the ideal career for me. –Jody, interview participant

The percentage of new teachers leaving the profession is somewhat surprising.

Why do so many novice teachers leave the profession well before they reach retirement age and after they have completed the necessary training and certification process to become qualified teachers? One answer to this question can be found in novice teacher job satisfaction. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) conducted a quantitative study that looked at the reasons behind novice teacher attrition. Much like an exit interview, the Teacher Follow-up Survey was given to a national sample of US teachers that left the teaching profession the year before. The teachers were asked to rate their top three reasons for departure. Pursuit for a better job or career and job dissatisfaction was indicated by 68% of the participants. Among the novice teachers that chose to leave the profession because of dissatisfaction, three-fourths of them listed their quitting in reference to low teaching salaries. Additionally, school-working conditions were also indicated as primary reasons for leaving, namely: student discipline problems, lack of administrative support, poor student motivation, and lack of teacher decision-making (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Although Ingersoll & Smith study offers real insight into the reasons behind novice teacher attrition, the quantitative methods used to examine novice teacher commitment

lack the in depth analysis provided by qualitative methods. A study that included qualitative methods would provide a more personal, detailed and nuanced analysis of novice teacher commitment.

Consistent with the Ingersoll and Smith study, Johnson and Birkeland (2003) also found similar results in a longitudinal study they conducted with novice teachers in Massachusetts's public schools. Johnson and Birkeland were interested in the nature of teaching in contemporary times, novice teacher retention, and the conditions that enable novice teachers to stay in the profession. Johnson and Birkeland found that, more than anything else, school working conditions and whether novice teachers felt that they could be effective with their students determined whether or not a teacher would leave the teaching profession. These studies indicate two possible solutions for novice teacher attrition. First, schools could create environments and working conditions that encourage novice teachers to stay in the profession. For example, give them adequate mentor support during their first years of teaching, provide them time to collaborate with their grade level peers, and offer them the resources that will allow them instructional success in the classroom. Second, schools could find ways for novice teachers to expand on their feelings of effectiveness in the classroom.

Feelings of Effectiveness

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) argue that a teacher's feelings of effectiveness in the classroom play a decisive role in their decision to commit to the teaching profession. The educational research community has examined feelings of effectiveness in the classroom through the construct of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is related to a teacher's

belief in his or her ability to have a positive effect on student learning—the feeling of being an effective teacher (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Teacher efficacy has also been defined as a “teacher’s belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated.” (Guskey & Passaro, 1994, p. 4). Self-efficacy draws on the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory argues that individuals construct beliefs about their capacity to perform a given task through cognitive processes, social interaction, and vicarious or mastery experiences (Bandura, 1986).

Researchers have used the conceptual framework of self-efficacy to determine the antecedents of novice teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs, which school factors support strong self-efficacy beliefs among novice teachers, and how novice teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs change over time, (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Hoy & Spero, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). These studies indicate the importance of high self-efficacy beliefs among novice teachers. However, there are some gaps in the research. For instance, the studies that have previously been conducted in regard to measuring self-efficacy have used a self-efficacy measurement tool in the form of a questionnaire or survey. While the use of surveys and questionnaires has been instrumental in determining the importance of self-efficacy beliefs and how they might be fostered and developed, case studies and interviews have not been used to gain a deeper more detailed understanding of novice teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs. The exclusive use of quantitative methods is problematic because surveys and questionnaires don’t capture the full picture of novice teachers’ development of self-efficacy beliefs. For example, multiple-choice questionnaires are often drawn from the literature and can be solely determined by the researcher

(Richardson, 1996). Perhaps novice teachers are developing self-efficacy beliefs in ways that are not referenced or addressed on a survey or questionnaire. By interviewing novice teachers themselves about their feelings of effectiveness in the classroom their voice is included in the self-efficacy literature and a more complete picture of the self-efficacy construct is presented. An additional gap in the research is the way novice teachers are categorized. Novice teachers are a distinct group and when studying their self-efficacy beliefs they should be seen as a separate population. Currently, the quantitative methods used to measure self-efficacy beliefs are the same for both novice and veteran teachers. Novice teachers experience numerous challenges, typically encounter an urban teaching context, and develop their teaching skills in different ways from their more experienced counterparts. Their teaching experience and their feelings of effectiveness, and hence self-efficacy beliefs, would be different and defined differently than more experienced teachers. These differences would not be captured in a survey designed for all teachers. In light of the many challenges that novice teachers face, it is quite possible that novice teachers wouldn't consider themselves effective until later on in their careers. Perhaps feelings of ineffectiveness are even to be expected given the challenges and experiences that many new teachers have when they start teaching. A more nuanced way of understanding novice teacher's self-efficacy beliefs would be to recognize them as a separate group with specific characteristics and to explore their feelings of effectiveness by asking them more broadly about their personal beliefs and experiences, including the time and content of their teacher education programs. These more personal insights would enlighten the literature regarding novice teacher beliefs and experiences and how they relate to feelings of effectiveness.

Considering that feelings of ineffectiveness rank high in novice teachers' reasons for leaving the profession, it is a trend worth studying when looking at novice teacher retention. This connection substantiates an argument about feelings of effectiveness and novice teacher retention: if novice teachers experienced more feelings of effectiveness in the classroom they would remain in the teaching profession. The self-efficacy construct provides a different way to understand novice teachers' feelings of effectiveness in the classroom. However, the use of this construct won't be helpful unless qualitative methods are used in the study of self-efficacy beliefs and novice teachers are considered a separate group with distinct characteristics. In addressing the gaps revealed in the self-efficacy research we might shed a brighter light on novice teacher self-efficacy beliefs and their commitment to the teaching profession.

The next step in studying the novice teacher retention phenomenon is to conduct a study that views the novice teacher's voice as paramount and supports three research goals. First, the study would use qualitative methods in drawing conclusions about novice teachers and their feelings of effectiveness. Second, the study would explore novice teachers' beliefs and experiences with the perception that novice teachers are a distinct population. Last, the study would explore the beliefs and experiences that foster novice teacher's commitment to the teaching profession. By asking novice teachers about their experiences and beliefs, insight about their personal feelings of commitment and their feelings of effectiveness would be gained. This new knowledge would aid in our understanding of novice teachers' decisions to leave the profession.

In an effort to further develop the argument presented in this study, and to broaden the understanding of novice teachers and their beliefs about teaching, an

ecocultural framework was used.

Theoretical Framework

The ecocultural theoretical framework was drawn upon in an effort to better understand novice teacher's beliefs and experiences, novice teacher's feelings of effectiveness, and novice teacher commitment. The next section outlines ecological theory and its principal components.

Ecocultural theory. Ecocultural theory was developed and first presented by Bronfenbrenner (1976). Bronfenbrenner's ecological system posits that individuals develop and learn within concentric settings that mutually create each other. The individual or learners in this particular case are novice teachers. Within this mutual creation is a relationship of reciprocity where novice teacher behavior affects social settings and social settings affect novice teacher behavior. Bronfenbrenner stresses the interactions that happen between growing organisms and their forever changing environments. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system or "environment" is conceptualized as a "nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next" (p. 514). This nested arrangement includes four cultural contexts; they are the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem.

The microsystem. The microsystem is a group of settings that contain the learner (see Figure 1). Bronfenbrenner further explains the microsystem setting as a location where learners engage in specific activities and are responsible for specific roles over a set time period. For example, the novice teacher may participate in a variety of settings such as classroom, church, home, and school. For each setting, the novice teacher

engages in specific activities and acts out particular roles. The classroom setting is of particular importance for the novice teacher. Components of the classroom setting could be student characteristics, teacher characteristics, teacher ideology, role definitions, class size, and activity structure (Ashton & Webb, 1986). These classroom-setting components affect a novice teacher's interactions with her students and colleagues.

The mesosystem. The mesosystem consists of the interactions of the major settings that a learner is a part of during specific points in his or her life. For example, for a novice teacher, the mesosystem might entail interactions among graduate school, workplace, and family. It might also include interactions between church and neighborhood. In regards to the novice teacher, some components that might affect key interactions between settings are school size and demographic characteristics, school norms, collegial relations, principal-teacher relations, decision-making structures, and parent school relations (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Bronfenbrenner concludes his explanation of the mesosystem by stating that the mesosystem is a system of microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1976).

The exosystem. A teacher's microsystem interacts with a setting called the exosystem. The exosystem consists of the settings that a teacher doesn't participate in on a regular basis (Rogoff, 2003). These settings could support or inhibit the growth of the learner, and may even determine what goes on in a learner's microsystem and corresponding settings. Examples of these settings include the workplace, the neighborhood, the mass media, government agencies, communication and transportation facilities, and informal social networks (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). Within a novice teacher's microsystem, the exosystem affects their success or disappoint in important

ways. For example, how the mass media portrays teachers and dropping test scores affects how a novice teacher views their profession. Judicial and legislative mandates, in addition to school district characteristics, also influence a novice teacher's exosystem (Ashton and Webb, 1986).

The macrosystem. The local micro-, meso-, and exo-systems are the concrete manifestations of the macrosystem. The macrosystem includes the larger social, educational, legal, and political systems that set the pattern for more concrete activities (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). For example, within a given society all classrooms look relatively the same. In fact, most institutions, both formal and informal, look as if they were created from the same blueprint. Bronfenbrenner considers these "blueprints" to be the macrosystem. These blueprints are usually implicit and informal, but can be explicit in laws, regulations, or rules. Most often macrosystems are carried unknowingly and can be discernible in the customs and practices of everyday life. In regards to the classroom setting and the novice teacher, there are two basic cultural beliefs that are part of the macrosystem—the conceptions of the learner and conceptions of the role of education (Ashton and Webb, 1986). Conceptions of the learner have to do with the way our society attributes success and failure to schoolchildren. It is our cultural belief that intelligence is a stable trait, and for this reason US schools typically ascribe school failure to the personal ability that is found in children. Likewise, our US education system supports the assumption that any motivated student can experience success and advancement. When a student does fail we are inclined to believe that the student was not motivated or didn't have the sufficient abilities to succeed (Ashton & Webb, 1986).

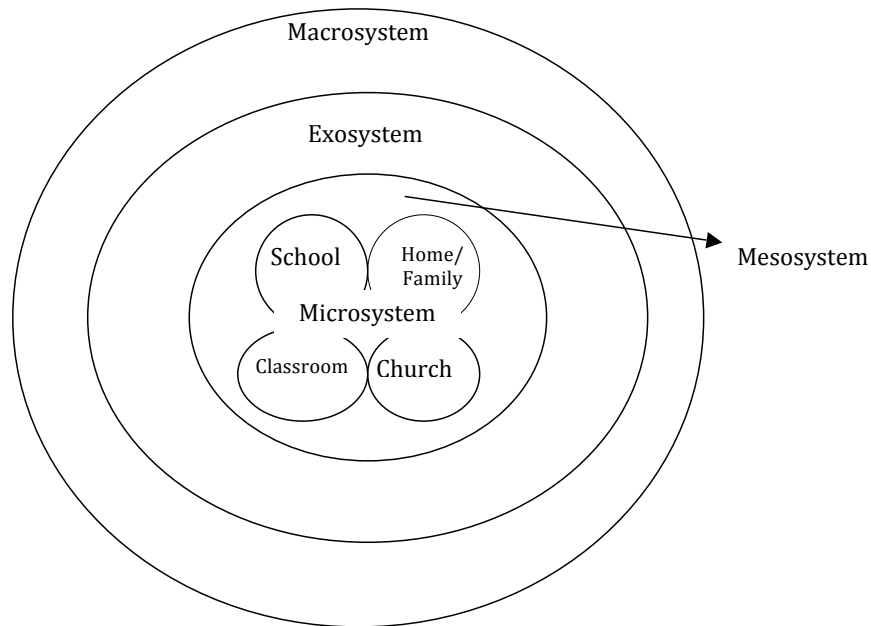


Figure 1: *Bronfenbrenner's Ecology Systems Environment*

Ecocultural systems theory guides our understanding of novice teachers' beliefs and experiences in three important ways. First, ecocultural systems theory takes into consideration all the different political, cultural, and social contexts that contribute to a novice teacher's beliefs. The ecocultural lens allows for a broad interpretation of the reciprocal relationship between a novice teacher's social contexts and how beliefs may develop within those contexts. Second, ecocultural systems theory allows for the transitory settings that make up a beginning teacher's career. For example, a novice teacher moves through three different settings before they stay in a permanent teaching job. First novice teachers go through a teacher education program, next a student teaching experience, and last a potentially permanent teaching job. Each one of these settings will afford the novice teacher specific experiences that will inevitably affect the novice

teacher's beliefs. Ecocultural systems theory helps to clarify the relationship between a novice teacher's transitory contexts and their subsequent beliefs about teaching. Finally, ecocultural systems theory accounts for the indirect influences that a novice teacher may experience. These indirect influences surface in the exosystem. Although the exosystem doesn't play a key role in the day-to-day experiences of a novice teacher, its influence on the beliefs of novice teachers is equally powerful. For example, if a workplace is unsupportive or chaotic, novice teachers' beliefs about their role as a teacher or their effectiveness with their students may be compromised. Ecocultural system theory accounts for both the immediate and peripheral contexts that affect a novice teacher's beliefs.

Ecocultural theory maintains that there is a relationship of reciprocity between an individual and their social settings. This same reciprocity can be found in an individual's development of beliefs and attitudes, including beliefs about their effectiveness. The microsystem's settings affect a novice teacher's beliefs and attitudes, and a novice teacher's beliefs will invariably affect the setting of her classroom. Ecocultural theory also places importance on an individual's social settings or context. This understanding illuminates the importance of the social context in the development of novice teacher beliefs. For these reasons, school and community context, and how those settings might affect both the experiences and beliefs of novice teachers, were included in the research questions.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore novice teachers' beliefs, experiences, and feelings of effectiveness in order to better understand their commitment to the teaching profession. More specifically, the current study strove to understand the distinct population of novice teachers in light of their development of self-efficacy in the classroom and how this development might affect their commitment to the teaching profession. Three research questions were designed to guide this study:

1. What are novice teachers' beliefs about teaching? Specifically, what are their beliefs about their effectiveness in the classroom? How does the school or community context relate to novice teachers' beliefs about teaching?
2. What are novice teachers' pre and early teaching experiences? Specifically, how are these experiences related to their beliefs about teaching and their feeling of effectiveness in the classroom?
3. How do novice teachers talk about their commitment to the teaching profession? What kinds of beliefs and experiences are related to their commitment to the profession?

By asking these research questions, a broader understanding of novice teacher commitment is attained. A discussion of the literature that illuminates novice teacher experiences, beliefs, and commitment is presented next.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The review presented below explores the fields of research needed to support the argument and research questions proposed above. The review begins by discussing novice teachers and their characteristics.

Novice Teachers

For the purpose of this research review novice teachers are beginning teachers who have been teaching for five years or less (Ingersol & Smith, 2003). Each novice teacher encounters their first years of teaching differently, however, they do share some common work related experiences and concerns. Novice teacher experiences are outlined in a study conducted by Olson and Osborne (1991). Olson and Osborne asked four first year teachers located in a Canadian urban school district to write about their experiences as first year teachers. From these written explanations, the researchers coded for specific experiential themes and then returned for semi-structured interviews with the participants. Olson and Osborne found 10 common themes among the novice teachers they interviewed (see Table 1). These experiential themes speak to the challenges and hardships that most novice teachers face in the classroom.

Table 1: *Olson and Osborn's Synthesis of Novice Teacher Experiences*

Novice Teacher Experience	Explanation of Experience
Initial Orientation	Novice teachers have discrepancies between their early perceptions of the classroom and current classroom realities.
Sense of Responsibility	Novice teachers feel a deep sense of responsibility to quickly become professional competent teachers.
Ability to Meet Expectations	Novice teachers had expected to feel familiar with the classroom, but once they started teaching they felt very disoriented and unfamiliar.
Achieving Control	Novice teachers struggle with maintaining classroom control. This affects their perceived responsibilities and their need for reorientation.
Need for Affiliation	Novice teachers have a need to feel like they fit in with the rest of the staff.
Finding Security	Novice teachers pick a “reality-based focus” that they build from in order to change their classrooms
Balancing Content and Process Needs	Novice teachers typically start with either a focus on content or process. They eventually move toward a more integrated approach.
Evaluation of Goal Achievement	Novice teachers judge their achievement on whether they were able to integrate content with presentation of materials, the ability to maintain classroom control, finding emotional and physical security, and developing a sense of affiliation.
Searching for Understanding	Initial teaching anxieties later develop into a search for better understanding their roles as teachers.
Changes in Role Orientation	As they year progress, novice teachers modify their role definitions to include more of their reality based experiences.

Olson and Osborne’s (1991) research is further supported in the literature. Corcoran (1981) found that most novice teachers encounter a period of “transition shock.” Corcoran describes this time as a period of “not knowing.” This is a transitional period where novice teachers realize that they are expected to perform and accomplish as much as veteran teachers, but they have yet to master the instructional skills to do so

effectively. Moreover, Veenman (1984) posits that novice teachers struggle with socialization into their new schools and are often given the most difficult classes to teach. Although novice teachers are frequently given challenging classes, they are rarely provided with formal help and guidance (Herbert & Worthy, 2001).

In regards to novice teacher concerns, Birkeland and Johnson (2003) found that novice teachers share many feelings of apprehension and a general sense of insecurity. Novice teachers are apprehensive about the salary compensation and the lack of occupational prestige found in the teaching profession. Teaching lacks the social stature that is present in most long-term careers. Additionally, teaching offers limited upward career mobility and usually entails subordinate status (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). This causes some angst as novice teachers grow older and start their own families. They may have to grapple with the reality of supporting a family on a meager teaching salary (Lortie, 1975). Moreover, Herbert and Worthy (2001) maintain that novice teachers typically feel isolation, insecurity, and a loss of idealism. Many teachers share these sentiments, however these feelings are magnified for the novice teacher given the limited support and peer collaboration that novice teachers typically receive. If the novice teacher had different expectations for their career, their experience of isolation and insecurity could be especially disheartening.

Novice teachers are entering the teaching profession at a time when teachers are under consistent scrutiny (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). School administration, parents, and policy makers alike are looking for standards-based teaching and high-test scores. This pressure to perform gives novice teachers little room for mistakes or on the job learning. Using qualitative methods to study novice teachers, and the ecocultural contexts

within which they work, would reveal how novice teachers manage and cope during their first five years of teaching. This insight would in turn shed light on how novice teacher's maintain commitment or decide to leave the teaching profession.

Teacher Beliefs

Before a clear definition of teacher beliefs can be presented it is important to recognize some of the challenges that have surfaced in investigating teacher beliefs. Coming up with a concise definition for teacher beliefs has proven problematic for three reasons. First, teacher beliefs have been thought of and labeled in many ways (Pajares, 1992). For example, teacher beliefs have been discussed in terms of opinions, attitudes, preconceptions, personal epistemologies, perspectives, conceptions, principles of practice, and orientations (Pajares, 1992). Second, it is challenging to investigate teacher beliefs because the researcher must often infer the beliefs of his or her participants (Chong, Wong & Lang, 2005). Beliefs are too central to an individual's identity or personal worldview to be able to identify them in a direct way to the principal researcher. Lastly, the confusion around belief terminology has made it difficult to distinguish beliefs from other forms of knowledge (Pajares, 1992; Nespor, 1987). Knowledge is something that can be modified or changed with new training or skills. Beliefs are harder to modify or change even in the face of contradictory evidence.

In an effort to bring some clarity to the literature, Nespor (1987) first looks at individual beliefs as a way to shed light on teacher beliefs. Nespor begins by separating knowledge from beliefs by defining beliefs in terms of four belief "features." These belief features can then serve as a model for understanding teacher beliefs and how they might

affect teacher's actions and teaching theories in the classroom. The features that define beliefs are existential presumption, alternativity, affective and evaluative loading, and episodic structure.

Existential presumption. Existential presumption is the idea that belief systems often contain assumptions about the existence or non-existence of entities. Beliefs in God or ghosts are strong examples of this feature, however existential presumption can also be demonstrated in less obvious and subtle ways. For example, teachers may label their students as lazy, immature, or intelligent. These are not simply seen as student characteristics but as entities embodied by the students (Nespor, 1987). Pajares (1992) elaborates further on this feature by maintaining existential presumptions are incontrovertible truths that everyone holds. They are viewed as undeniable entities that exist beyond individual control or knowledge. Pajares (1992) states "people believe them because, like Mount Everest, they are there" (p. 309).

Alternativity. Alternativity refers to the creation in one's mind of ideal situations that differ significantly from current realities. An example of alternativity might be a teacher that believes her students will learn better if she treats them as her friends. She may go to great lengths to become friends with her students but she doesn't realize that in making friends with her students, she compromises her leadership of the class and the times where she might have to discipline her students. She does not believe how this kind of relationship actually inhibits her students' academic success (Nespor, 1987).

Affective and Evaluative Loading. Affective and evaluative loading refers to the idea that belief systems rely heavily on feelings, moods and subjective evaluations based on personal preferences (Nespor, 1987). Pajares (1992) extends this claim by stating that

the affective and evaluative nature of beliefs creates a generic knowledge structure. However, this structure is unreliable because an individual's beliefs influence how they may perceive their experiences and the world around them. An individual's affective and evaluative loading may even affect one's cognitive beliefs. Literature that discusses teacher expectations about students' ability has used affect and evaluation to uncover the consequences of teachers' unknown feelings about specific students (Nespor, 1987).

Episodic storage. Episodic storage suggests that belief systems are made up of "episodically" stored material derived from personal experience or from cultural or institutional sources. Beliefs often draw their power from previous events that have an affect on subsequent events. These episodes could be events or experiences that happened when a teacher was an elementary student or later on when she became a teacher. Perhaps a teacher had a particularly inspiring interaction with one of her teachers as a child. This experience created a belief structure that would later inform her teaching practices and instruction in her own classroom.

Nespor (1987) and Parajes (1992) both finish their description of teacher beliefs by maintaining that individual beliefs are often inconsistent within the same individual and for this reason can be disputed, are inflexible, and less likely to be dynamic. In fact the earlier a belief is adopted into the belief structure, the less likely it will be altered because these beliefs affect and strongly influence the processing of new information (Pajares, 1992). When beliefs do change, it is not due to knowledge evidence or informed scholarship but usually has to do with a "conversion or gestalt shift" (Nespor, 1987; p. 321). In fact belief systems often seem to defy reality and logic, however they are weighted more heavily than knowledge in determining how individuals define tasks and

deal with problems and for this reason, beliefs are strong predictors of individual behavior (Nespor, 1987).

The nature of beliefs and the characteristics that define an individual's belief system is important to take into consideration when conducting a research investigation. Because beliefs can be inconsistent within an individual's belief structure it is important to use measures and research methodology that is able to discover those inconsistencies. By interviewing novice teachers, and including their voice in the research, a clear picture of novice teacher's beliefs is captured.

The sources of teacher beliefs. The literature tells us that teacher beliefs come from three sources: personal experience, experience with schooling and knowledge, and experience with formal knowledge—school subjects and pedagogical knowledge (Richardson, 1996). Personal experiences are those aspects of life that contribute to an individual's worldview. For example, this includes beliefs about self in relation to others, understandings of the relationship of school to society, and other forms of personal, familiar, and cultural understandings. Experience with schooling and instruction consists of the 13-14 years of observational experience that every teacher brings with them before they enter the actual teaching profession (Lortie, 1975). These observations influence a teacher's belief about what it means to be a teacher. These personal teaching beliefs are powerful and serve as a filter for a teacher's actual teaching experience in their own classroom (Richardson, 1996). Experience with formal knowledge includes understandings that have been agreed on within a community of scholars as worthwhile and valid. Within formal knowledge is pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of school subjects, both of which is usually encountered during a teacher education program.

Teacher beliefs, as outlined above, imply that many different life experiences contribute to the formulation of strong and enduring beliefs about teaching and learning.

The importance of teacher beliefs. Teacher beliefs are an important component and have strong implications for providing instruction. There is a clear relationship between beliefs and teaching practices (Richardson, 1996). This relationship suggests that a teacher's beliefs toward a given subject, their attitude toward their students, and how they believe students learn all affect their subsequent actions in the classroom. Nespor (1987) further explains the role of teacher beliefs in making instructional decisions. Nespor posits that belief systems are very important in determining how an individual organizes their world into task environments and defines tasks and problems. In the case of teachers and their instructional responsibilities, an individual's beliefs will greatly influence how they prioritize the tasks at hand and what steps they take to address them.

Novice teacher beliefs. Experienced and novice teacher beliefs are similar in important ways, however there are some differences worth noting. When a novice teacher is learning how to teach, Richardson (1996) posits that his or her beliefs serve two functions. First they serve as a filter for the novice teacher's new and challenging experiences. As the novice teacher encounters problems or instructional responsibilities, they will draw on their existing beliefs, understandings, and preconceptions to address the task at hand. Existing prior knowledge plays a central role in how a novice teacher learns and how their new knowledge is shaped. Second, novice teacher beliefs serve as a focus for change in the process of their learning. This second function of novice teacher beliefs would only be realized within an intentional structure. For example, one argument for the

purpose of teacher education is to help novice teachers identify their beliefs and then help them substantiate those beliefs with authentic knowledge, or real-life experience.

Additionally, novice teachers are a distinctive group of professionals as they embark on their new careers because they have had plenty of personal experiences inside their new place of employment. Lawyers or doctors show up to their first day of work unfamiliar with their work culture, environment, and protocols. Contrary to this experience, novice teachers have spent a large amount of time attending schools and quite often have emotional connections and memories of their K-12 education. Parajes (1992) discusses this phenomenon by suggesting that novice teachers are, “insiders in a strange land” (p.323). This personal experience has led many novice teachers to develop their own theories and beliefs about education that are unlikely to change even in the face of factual information (Pajares, 1992).

Within this section literature regarding teacher beliefs and novice teacher beliefs is presented. Although there is a growing interest in understanding teacher beliefs, it has also been found that an individual’s beliefs are often difficult to investigate. Beliefs can be complex and contradictory and are not directly observable (Bullock, 2011). Beliefs tend to be so central to an individual’s worldview that the person under investigation is not able to identify or explain the beliefs that motivate their actions. For this reason beliefs must be operationalized and investigated in such a way as to uncover these contradictions and subtleties (Pajares, 1992). Qualitative interviewing is one such method. In undertaking a study that investigates teacher beliefs through personal interviews, a more complete and complex picture of teacher beliefs can be presented.

School and Community Context

Emphasizing the importance of school context is important because it takes into consideration ecocultural theory and the many important settings that affect the novice teacher and their subsequent development of teaching beliefs. The school setting is a key part of the mesosystem and includes a variety of variables, such as a novice teacher's mentor teacher, school resources, parental involvement, community demographics, or collegial support. Although school context is seen as important in the development of novice teacher beliefs, it has largely been defined in the limited terms of school setting—urban, rural, and suburban (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008). Ecocultural theory, however, argues that contexts include multiple settings and communities, including the underlying values and goals that shape them. The current study draws from the extant research including the construct school setting, despite this limited definition and aims to broaden the scope of investigation into the role of school context using an ecocultural approach.

While comparing urban, rural, and suburban schools there are some striking differences (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008). Rural and urban schools face more challenges in regards to resources, teacher quality and supply, and discipline than do suburban schools. For this reason, rural and urban schools have received more attention in regards to their specific contextual characteristics. Rural schools must overcome such obstacles as high student poverty rates, lack of money for teacher salaries, resources, and facilities, and difficulty in attracting and retaining quality teachers and administrators, and constraints on curriculum (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008). While rural schools have limited resources, they typically experience a strong sense of community within the school and receive local support from the community (Lomotey & Swanson, 1989). At the same time, urban

schools do not have the strong sense of community that is found in rural schools, where large districts and bureaucracy hamper leadership (Mitchie, 2005). Corocan, Walker, and White (1988) found that strong student-teacher relationships were not the norm in urban schools. Additionally, urban teachers cite large class sizes, discipline problems, and insufficient time for personal interaction as the causes for distant relationships with students. Teacher's salaries are usually comparable to other urban districts, however the neighborhoods surrounding the schools tend to be poor (Lomotey & Swanson, 1989). Moreover, urban schools usually experience such challenges as over-crowding, unsatisfactory facilities and resources and school violence (Mitchie, 2005). It becomes obvious in the description of both rural and urban schools that school context is a powerful influence in the life of any teacher. An ecocultural approach that takes this influence into consideration is important when striving to understand how novice teachers develop their teaching beliefs and beliefs about their effectiveness.

Novice teachers have identified school working conditions as one of their primary reasons for leaving the profession (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). In light of the importance of school working conditions, it is important to discuss urban school working conditions in more detail. There is more turnover and movement among teachers in urban schools and for this reason there is typically more novice teachers employed at urban schools (Jacob, 2007). Paradoxically, urban schools suffer less administrative support, less resources, and typically deal with the most challenging students (Jacob, 2007). Because urban schools struggle with these weak contextual factors, novice teachers are more prone to leave urban school settings. Undoubtedly, school contextual factors, both rural and urban, affect novice teacher's beliefs about teaching.

The importance of context in the development of novice teachers' beliefs validates ecocultural theory in its inclusion and emphasis of school context in the development of feelings of effectiveness. At the same time, the school context literature is limiting because it does not acknowledge the many components of ecocultural theory. The current study hopes to elaborate on the school context to include other ecocultural settings and systems in hopes of providing a more complete picture of how the ecocultural context affects a novice teacher's commitment to the teaching profession.

Pre-teaching and Early Teaching Experiences

Before a discussion of pre-teaching experiences can be explored, it is important to discuss how pre-teaching experiences might be defined. For the purpose of this review, pre-teaching experiences are any experiences that contribute to a novice teacher's beliefs, feelings of effectiveness, or commitment to the profession. This broad definition of pre-teaching experiences could include various events, happenings, or encounters. For example, pre-teaching experiences might include motherhood, student teaching, a Peace Corps experience, or an alternative certification program. Taking all experiences into account is decidedly more important when an ecocultural lens is being employed to develop a deeper and more complete understanding of teacher self-efficacy. However, it is beyond the scope of this review to present a complete picture of all the life experiences that might have contributed to a novice teacher's beliefs or feelings of effectiveness. For this reason, two of the most common pre-teaching experiences have been focused on, namely teacher preparation and student teaching. Student teaching is typically an integral part of most teacher preparation programs, however because of its lasting impression on

new teachers it merits a separate and more thorough discussion. A discussion of pre-teaching experiences allows a deeper understanding of the values and experiences that novice teachers typically bring with them as they interact with the many settings within their ecocultural system.

Teacher preparation. There are two pathways to completing teacher preparation and becoming a classroom teacher. A student interested in becoming a classroom teacher could enroll and graduate from a teacher preparation program or a student could go through an alternative certification program. Because becoming certified through a teacher preparation program is more common, this review will begin by discussing teacher preparation programs and some of their more common characteristics.

Teacher preparation programs. According to Morey, Bezuk, and Chiero (1997), it is difficult to define pre-service teacher preparation programs in the United States. They found that teacher education programs are quite diverse in their practices and teacher requirements. This diversity is due in large part to the distinct regulations and licensing requirements that each state has for teachers before they become practicing educators. Indeed, this is a criticism of teacher education programs in general—the standards for the teaching profession are different for each state (Darling-Hammond, 2000). For example, in the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin, teachers have to go through a highly rigorous credentialing process, while in Louisiana a prospective high school teacher does not need a minor in the field within which they will teach. These across state differences make it difficult to draw commonalities between teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Although teacher education programs are different in every state, there are some commonalities between them. Most pre-services teachers take pre-requisites classes, typically referred to as general education, for the first two years of their undergraduate studies. For the remainder of their studies, they take classes specializing in subject matter or pedagogy. More specifically these classes include content knowledge, teaching methodology, human development, and curriculum design (Morey et al., 1997). In addition to this, nearly all teacher education programs entail some form of student teaching. Usually during this time student teachers are placed in a classroom with the support of an experienced teacher and a university supervisor (Morey et al., 1997). This first teaching experience may be the first experience that a student teacher has had with teaching or with children.

There are a variety of program structures that affect the qualifications of pre-service teachers. There are four-year programs, five-year integrated programs, and fifth year programs. Four-year integrated programs include general education classes, subject matter preparation, professional education coursework, and student teaching in a four-year program that concludes with a bachelor's degree in education. Five-year programs are more integrated and involve undergraduate programs, professional study, and student teaching. There is more of an emphasis on field experiences in five-year integrated programs. Lastly, there are fifth-year programs, or graduate programs. These programs require that the candidates have a bachelor's degree in an academic major prior to admission to the credential program. Most fifth-year programs are two semesters long and include professional education coursework and student teaching (Morey et al., 1997).

Among teacher education programs that are highly rated, there are some clear components that make them successful (Darling-Hammond, 2000). They are typically small fifth-year, graduate level programs, which last from 12-24 months. They incorporate 24 weeks or more of student teaching where there is a strong emphasis on extensive, vigilantly supervised clinical work that is directly linked to the coursework that the pre-service teachers are taking in their college classes. Moreover, university supervisors work as instructors and advisors to the student teacher, while also collaborating with the master teacher on developing classroom practice. This kind of interaction develops strong relationships between pre-service teachers, university supervisors, and master teachers. This relationship allows for more coherence and parallel teaching ideology to occur between the preparation program and the hosting public school. In sum, successful teacher preparation programs combine experience, reflection, and intentional study with coursework that focuses on the development of content-based pedagogy (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Alternative certification. Alternative certification programs are programs that offer alternative pathways to traditional teacher certification. These programs were created to address school districts needs for teacher supply and demand. In recognizing its need for more teachers, a district looks to develop a relationship with a nearby university that presents and organizes the appropriate coursework need for accelerated certification. Alternative certification programs are usually hybrid models that include district training, university course work and classroom observations. Usually teachers must have a bachelor's degree to enroll and after a short 8-week summer session can begin teaching the following year with the understanding that taking corresponding night

and weekend classes will certify them to become teachers later on in their teaching career (Grossman & Loeb, 2010). In large, urban schools, alternative certification programs provide a substantial number of teachers. For example, over a four-year time period, New York City's alternative certified teachers went from zero to 2,800 (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2006).

There are both advocates and critics for alternative certification programs. Advocates for alternative certification programs maintain that these programs bring qualified and dedicated people into the profession that would otherwise be deterred from going back to school full time for a teaching credential. Critics hold that prospective teachers don't get enough time to reflect or develop their practice in ways that allow them success in the classroom (Morey et al., 1997). While there are mixed reviews as to whether alternative certification is effective in providing school districts with qualified teachers, the research also indicates the components that are indispensable to successful alternative certification programs. These components include strong partnerships between preparation programs and school districts, good participant screening and selection process, strong supervision and mentoring during teaching, solid curriculum that includes coursework in classroom basics and teaching methods, and sufficient and relevant training and coursework prior to participants full time teaching (National Education Association, n.d.).

Student teaching. Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, and Shulman (2005) found that the student teaching experience is the “most pervasive pedagogy in teacher education” (p. 409). It is an experience that many teachers look back on as the most important component in their professional education. Student teaching is a

field experience in an actual classroom where student teachers link theory to practice. Usually during this time student teachers are placed in a classroom with the support of an experienced teacher and a university supervisor (Morey et al., 1997). This support has expectations that can vary from school to school but ideally, student teachers are placed within classrooms where they receive purposeful coaching from a veteran expert teacher in the same teaching field. This cooperating teacher would offer modeling of lessons, co-planning, consistent feedback, repeated opportunities to practice, and frequent reflection of lessons taught. There is the assumption that the student teacher starts with little responsibility and gradually takes on more responsibility as their student teaching experience progresses (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). While these are the idealistic expectations of most student teachers, Darling-Hammond et al. found that student teaching experiences vary greatly from between teacher education programs and between individual pre-service teachers. This first teaching experience has the potential to be instrumental in the success of novice teachers, but it can also be a stressful and an unnerving time.

The student teaching experience can be nerve-racking for the pre-service teacher for a variety of reasons. For example, student teachers work within a particular context and have distinct characteristics that put them at risk for stress and burnout (Fives, Hamman, & Olivarez, 2007). These characteristics include high expectations, knowledge of current pedagogy, and a heightened desire to meet the needs of their students in addition to meeting the demands of their cooperating teacher and university supervisor. Moreover, student teachers are in an uncertain position because their knowledge of children is still quite new and they are asked to take on a task that includes both “student”

and “teacher” roles. This ambiguous position is compounded by the varying support that a student teacher might receive from their cooperating teacher. Student teachers see their student teaching experience as the first test in their teaching abilities that they are asked to complete (Fives et al., 2007). Student teaching can be a time of uncertainty and anxiety as pre-service teachers try their hand at teaching for the first time.

The insight gained by studying the common pre-teaching experiences of novice teachers is indispensable when looking at novice teacher beliefs. Many of the beliefs that were developed during a novice teacher’s preparation program, and corresponding student teacher experience, are the same beliefs that they carry with them throughout their teaching careers. Asking novice teachers about their personal experiences with education, their preparation programs, and their student teacher experiences, affords us a deeper understanding of how these experiences may contribute to their development of teaching beliefs.

Feelings of Effectiveness

Earlier in this review, feelings of effectiveness were cited as one of the definitive reasons that teachers stay or leave the teaching profession (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Feelings of effectiveness have been discussed in the educational literature in terms of a teacher’s self-efficacy beliefs. Although self-efficacy research has been limited in that it has predominately used quantitative methods, it has been instrumental in contributing to our knowledge of how teachers develop feelings of effectiveness in the classroom. For this reason, it is important to look at the self-efficacy literature when studying teachers’ beliefs and specifically beliefs about their effectiveness in the classroom.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as the beliefs people have about their personal capabilities and how these beliefs shape what they are able to accomplish, what they try to accomplish, and how they may deal with success and challenges along the way (Maddux & Gusselin, 2003). Maddux and Gusselin (2003) extend this definition further by stating that self-efficacy beliefs are beliefs people have about what they are able to achieve under certain circumstances or conditions. Previous to the term of self-efficacy, the field of psychology had been using other words to describe the relationship between an individual's self-perceived capabilities and their subsequent accomplishments. Among these terms and ideas were self-motivation, perceived control, or casual attributes (Maddux & Gusselin, 2003). Bandura (1977) was the first to formally introduce the term self-efficacy within the grounded theory of social cognition. In Bandura's landmark study, "Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change" (1977), Bandura maintains that self-efficacy is the "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments." (p. 193). That is to say, self-efficacy beliefs are the beliefs an individual has about his or her capabilities in regard to a specific task. In another source, Bandura (1997) makes an additional distinction. Bandura states that self-efficacy is not a measure of someone's skills, but "a set of differentiated self-beliefs linked to distinct realms of functioning" (p. 36). Bandura postulates that self-efficacy beliefs influence an individual's motivation to act, the effort they put forth in their endeavors, and the persistence they exhibit in the face of hardships. Bandura is careful to note that self-efficacy beliefs are shaped by an individual's *perceived* ability as opposed to their *actual* ability (Bandura, 1997). When self-perceived abilities are slightly

over an individual's actual competence level, their efforts are most fruitful (Bandura, 1997).

Bandura (1997) presents four sources of self-efficacy beliefs. They are enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal. These four sources contribute to the analysis of a given task and to an individual's perceived personal efficacy in different ways.

Enactive Mastery Experiences. Enactive mastery experiences are the strongest source of self-efficacy information. The perception that a given task has been successful strengthens one's self-efficacy beliefs, which aids in future successful accomplishments. Self-efficacy beliefs are strengthened when challenging tasks are achieved with little assistance. At the same time, if an individual experiences failure before a sense of self-efficacy is formed, their self-efficacy beliefs are undermined, especially if they experience failure early on in their experiences. The effects of enactive mastery experiences are somewhat complex. If an individual gains success too easily, they in turn will have robust beliefs in their self-efficacy. However, if an individual only experiences effortless success, when given a more challenging task, they are more likely to give up (Bandura, 1997). Ideally, a sense of efficacy that can withstand challenges and failures is one that has been gained through overcoming difficulties through perseverance.

Vicarious experiences. Vicarious experiences are experiences where an individual watches someone else complete or model a given task successfully. These observations clarify or help individuals understand the given task or assignment. Conceivably, people often presuppose that if someone else can reach a goal or complete a task successfully, they can also achieve the same goals. In this way, modeling serves to

advance the self-efficacy beliefs among individuals looking to master a given task. In his discussion of vicarious experiences, Bandura (1997) explains that for most activities there are no absolute judgments of adequacy. Bandura maintains that people must appraise their abilities based on the capabilities and competence of others. An example of this phenomenon can be found while reflecting on the vicarious experiences of a novice teacher. The novice teacher has no basis for knowing how well she is teaching without the knowledge of how her corresponding, more experienced, colleagues are teaching. Once she observes a modeled lesson, she develops a perception that will inform the efficacy beliefs she has about her instruction. If vicarious experiences lead to comparisons that demonstrate shortfalls, self-efficacy beliefs suffer. However, if these same comparisons lead to perceptions of adequate or higher levels of personal performance, self-efficacy beliefs are enhanced.

Verbal persuasion. Verbal persuasion refers to a wide spectrum of performance feedback. Providing important information about a task, offering words of encouragement, or giving concise feedback are examples of verbal persuasion. In individual's sense of efficacy is enhanced when significant others demonstrate faith and encouragement in one's capabilities. This is especially true during hard or challenging times (Bandura, 1997). Bandura is careful to note that verbal persuasion is limited in its power to foster self-efficacy beliefs over sustained periods of time. In order to raise self-efficacy beliefs, the verbal persuasion has to be realistic and support the accurate abilities of the individual involved. If verbal persuasion is based on false assumptions about an individual's skills, it could increase the chance of failure and discredit the persuader's intentions.

Physiological arousal. Physiological arousal or physiological emotions are the feelings one experiences during a given task. These feelings affect the perceptions individuals have about their competence or ability level. Bandura claims that people often read their physical responses to activities or tasks to judge whether they will be successful. A clear example of this is the anxiety a student may feel when they are required to do a classroom presentation in front of their peers. The anxiety or breathlessness they feel before they get up in front of the class may be an indicator to them that they will not be successful in their presentation. Often people have low efficacy beliefs in regards to a given task, anticipate negative outcomes, and for this reason develop negative physical arousal reactions that in turn cause their worst fears to be realized. Bandura concludes his discussion of physiological arousal by maintaining that to foster self-efficacy beliefs, positive physical reactions and emotions must be created, while stress and negative reactions must be reinterpreted or reduced (Bandura, 1997).

Mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal affect how an individual may predict the success they will experience during a given task. Each of these sources of self-efficacy may carry different weight depending on how many times the task has been attempted. For example, for the novice teacher vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal may carry more potency during their student teaching or their first year of teaching because they haven't acquired a body of mastery experiences from which they may draw their self-efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

Novice teachers and self-efficacy. Attention to the self-efficacy beliefs of novice teachers is especially important. As noted earlier, self-efficacy beliefs are developed early

on and once they are created they are resistant to change. For novice teachers, this means that self-efficacy beliefs begin to develop during student teaching and then are built upon during each sequential year of teaching until they are more permanently formed. The literature that discusses novice teachers and their self-efficacy beliefs is limited in two ways. First, novice teachers have not been studied as a separate population with specific learning characteristics and experiences. In the studies mentioned below all teachers, regardless of experiences, were given the same quantitative measure to make claims about self-efficacy beliefs. Second, self-efficacy beliefs are often studied in terms of comparisons. These comparisons include comparing student teachers to first year teachers, comparing novice teachers to veteran teachers, and comparing first year teachers to fifth year teachers. Comparisons can be important when making claims, however they are limited in that the findings and subsequent conclusions can only go as far as the comparisons that are being made.

For example, in a comparison of student teachers and first year teachers, Hoy and Spero (2005) conducted a longitudinal investigation that assessed the efficacy beliefs of novice teachers at three different points: at the beginning of their teacher preparation program, at the end of student teaching, and at their end of their first year of teaching. Their participants included 53 prospective teachers in a joint Masters and Teacher certification program at a major midwestern university. The participants were predominantly white (95%) and female (71%). Hoy and Spero found that both general teaching efficacy and teaching efficacy rose during student teaching but fell after the first year of teaching and with actual experience as a teacher. Additionally, Hoy and Spero found a correlation between novice teacher support and level of self-efficacy beliefs. The

Hoy and Spero study speaks to the importance of the ecocultural context of novice teachers. When the teaching context changed from pre-service to a permanent teaching position, or they received more support, their self-efficacy beliefs were positively affected.

In a similar study, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) studied the antecedents of novice and experienced teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. More specifically they were interested in how mastery experiences, verbal persuasion, in the form of interpersonal support from administrators, parents, colleagues, and the community, in addition to the availability of resources might affect the self-efficacy beliefs of experienced and novice teachers. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy surveyed 255 teachers with varying teaching experience ranging from one to 29 years of experience. They found that the self-efficacy scores were lower among novice teacher when compared to more experienced teachers. This finding is not surprising due to the inexperience of novice teachers in the classroom. More telling are the results for mastery experiences, verbal persuasion, and availability of resources. Verbal persuasion proved to be more important for novice teachers than for career teachers, and mastery experiences made the strongest contribution to self-efficacy judgments for both novice and experienced teachers. In regards to the availability of resources, access to instructional supplies was particularly important to novice teachers. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's study highlights the many components that can be part of a novice teacher's ecocultural context. Further, the Tschannen-Moran and Hoy study indicates that novice teachers are distinct in how they receive and interpret feedback. This insight is especially important when looking at how to best develop novice teacher self-efficacy beliefs.

In a final study, Glickman and Tamashiro (1982) compared first year, fifth year, and former teachers on three personality traits. The traits included efficacy, ego development, and problem solving. At a southeastern teacher education institute, a random sample of 250 participants was chosen from each class starting with 1975 and ending with the 1980 school year. From this sample, those that were chosen were divided in the following groups: those who had dropped out before their fifth year (N= 30), those that were in their fifth year of teaching (N=49) and those that had secured a first year teaching position (N=50). The participants were administered a four page questionnaire that included three tests to measure ego development, problem solving and efficacy. Glickman and Tamashiro found that first and fifth year teachers both thought of themselves as being effective with their students, (self-efficacy) while former teachers did not. This is not surprising as many teachers leave the profession because of feelings of low impact or ineffectiveness. There was no difference in the three groups in regards to problem solving. In regards to ego development, teachers in the profession had a greater sense of autonomy than those that had left, and those that have left seem to need more prescribed rules and guidelines for teaching. Finally, teachers that had been teaching for five years scored higher than all other groups on every personality trait. Glickman and Tamashiro's study touches on many components within the ecocultural mesosystem. Ecocultural theory posits that an individual's social setting affects the individual and likewise the individual affects the social setting. Although Glickman and Tamashiro were studying ego development, problem solving and efficacy, it can be hypothesized that these same personality traits were products of the teaching context itself.

Self-efficacy research usually stems from Bandura's social cognitive theory and his initial definition of self-efficacy. Social cognitive theory, and its subsequent self-efficacy framework, has given the educational research community a powerful lens through which the beliefs of teachers can be viewed. Using the pathways to self-efficacy that Bandura presents would put school administrators, school districts, and teacher education programs in a better position to find ways to retain novice teachers and support their professional commitment. Unfortunately, the self-efficacy literature contains some weaknesses, namely it has not investigated novice teachers as a separate population with specific characteristics. This oversight has resulted in an incomplete picture of how self-efficacy beliefs, or feelings of effectiveness, may be developed among novice teachers and how those feelings affect novice teacher commitment. By including the novice teacher's voice in the literature, a broader lens within which teacher's beliefs could be examined.

Commitment to the Teaching Profession

It has been found that 40-50% of novice teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). If a deep understanding of this exodus is to be realized, the opposite of teacher attrition must also be studied: teacher commitment. What is the nature of teacher commitment? How can professional teacher commitment be fostered? These questions are important to explore to determine if novice teacher beliefs, experiences, feelings of effectiveness, and teaching context are in fact related to novice teacher commitment.

Teacher commitment can be defined in different ways. Woods (1983) identifies three kinds of teacher commitment: vocational, professional, and career. Vocational commitment encourages teachers to seek out schools or administrations that compliment their same teaching values. Teachers that are committed to the teaching profession in a vocational way are dedicated to education in a broader sense. They see education as a means to fulfilling their ideals. Professionally committed teachers are driven by their teaching position and to career advancement. They may have the idea to become a teacher but then to later become a principal or a superintendent. Teachers that exhibit career commitment focus on what their teaching position can offer them in terms of what is important to them. For example, they typically remain in teaching because they have responsibilities such as family, house payments, or a pension to attend to (Woods, 1983). Others define teacher commitment in terms of internal motivation (Rosenholtz, 1991; Firestone & Pennell, 1993). It has been reasoned that when a teacher is highly motivated their feelings are closely tied to their successful performance. Successful performance rewards itself and encourages the teachers to continue to perform well (Rosenholtz, 1991).

There is considerable research out there that substantiates how teacher commitment to the profession is fostered. For example, Weiss (1999) found in a study done with first year teachers that occupational support in the form of teacher collaboration, teacher mentoring, and participation in decision-making led to a higher level of first year teacher commitment. Rosenholtz (1991) adds five more factors to Weiss's list of workplace commitment factors. Rosenholtz's factors include psychic rewards, managing student behavior, task autonomy, teaching learning communities, and

teacher certainty. Rosenholtz explains psychic rewards as a relationship between what teachers contribute to their profession and what they receive in return. If teachers are extending themselves more than they perceive they are receiving they are more apt to leave the profession. A component of psychic rewards is managing student behavior. If student management is seen as something that comes easily it can be as rewarding as student academic progress. Teacher commitment is also promoted when teachers are allowed task autonomy and discretion. Task autonomy and discretion is defined as the ability for teachers to experience personal responsibility for the outcomes of their work. If teachers can attribute work outcomes to outside influences, their efforts and interests are undermined even if the outcomes are positive (Rosenholtz, 1991). Teachers' learning opportunities provide teachers with opportunities to make their work more meaningful and important. If a job has been mastered it becomes boring and monotonous. By making learning opportunities available to teachers, their jobs stay more relevant and engaging thus enhancing their commitment. Lastly, teacher certainty plays a part in teacher professional commitment. Teacher certainty refers to how certain a teacher feels in relation to her instruction practice. When teachers feel certain about their instructional practice they put energy into expanding their efforts, particularly with low achieving students (Rosenholtz, 1991).

When reflecting on teacher professional commitment it is clear that school context plays an important role. Understanding the specific ecocultural model for novice teachers is key if we are to address their attrition rate and their subsequent commitment to the teaching profession.

Novice Teachers: Their Beliefs, Experiences and Commitment to the Profession.

Based on the literature reviewed above, novice teachers are a distinctive group of learners that experience adverse work conditions that may result in their leaving the profession. Because novice teachers are a distinct professional group that experiences their jobs differently, different instruments and methodologies may be needed to attain a better understanding of their experience and commitment to the profession. Of equal importance are novice teacher beliefs and how they are developed. The literature discusses how pre-service beliefs are significant because they serve as a lens for all other experiences to be filtered through as novice teachers begin and continue their teaching practice. Of particular note is the finding that once a belief is developed and used frequently, it is less likely to change over time even if contradicting evidence is presented. This finding speaks to the importance and essential nature of developing positive teaching beliefs early on in the teaching careers of novice teachers. Moreover, teacher beliefs, and more specifically beliefs about teacher effectiveness, play a key role in teacher actions in the classroom. Teacher beliefs affect a teacher's attitude toward his or her students and how teachers believe that students learn. Because of the multidimensionality of teacher beliefs, ecocultural theory provides a comprehensive framework through which teacher beliefs can be better understood. Ecocultural theory focuses our attention on the specific contexts and settings that affect the growth and learning of the novice teacher. These contexts and settings interact in a way that gives us insight into the specific experiences and cultural contexts of the novice teacher.

Summary

Chapter II presents a review of the current literature relevant to understanding the attrition rate of novice teachers. The literature indicates some gaps in the research. The most prevalent among these is a broader understanding of novice teacher's beliefs and more specifically their beliefs about their own effectiveness. A more authentic understanding of novice teacher's beliefs could be achieved by looking at novice teachers through an eco-cultural lens and by asking novice teachers themselves about their beliefs and early teaching experiences. The novice teacher voice is important because it provides insight into the values, experiences, and thoughts of novice teachers while they develop their beliefs about teaching. This enlightened view of teacher beliefs can best be achieved through a mixed methods approach. A mixed methods approach acknowledges the quantitative studies that have already been done, while also taking into consideration what can be achieved through qualitative methods. Qualitative methods allows for a deeper understanding of the nuanced relationships between a novice teacher's multiple settings in addition to providing insight into the personal experiences of novice teachers. In using mixed methods to conduct the current study, a refreshing perspective to the novice teacher literature is added.

Chapter III: Methodology

This study uses an eco-cultural approach and a mixed methods design informed by Brofenbrenner's (1976) ecocultural theory to further understand how context, pre teaching experiences, and current teaching experiences contribute to a novice teacher's feelings of effectiveness in the classroom. The following research questions are addressed:

1. What are novice teachers' beliefs about teaching? Specifically, what are their beliefs about their effectiveness in the classroom? How does the school or community context relate to novice teachers' beliefs about teaching?
2. What are novice teachers' pre and early teaching experiences? Specifically, how are these experiences related to their beliefs about teaching and their feeling of effectiveness in the classroom?
3. How do novice teachers talk about their commitment to the teaching profession? What kinds of beliefs and experiences are related to their commitment to the profession?

District Context

Harmony Elementary School District (HESD), a fictitious name, is located in southern California within 5 miles of the U.S./Mexico international border. HESD is the largest elementary district in the state and includes 45 urban and residential elementary schools. HESD serves 28, 000 students and 1, 413 teachers, making the teacher to student ration 19.4 students to every teacher. Of the students that attend schools in HESD, 65% are Hispanic, 13% are White, 11% are Filipino, 4% are African-American, and 3% are

Asian Pacific Islander, and 1% are of other ethnic background. Additionally, 35% of HESD's students are English Language Learners. Every year all HESD schools are required to administer the California Standardized Test (CST). This test produces the Academic Performance Index (API) for each school. In 2010 (California Department of Education, 2010) the average API score in HESD was 841 (SD=43.8, the lowest score was 742 and the highest was 916). Of the 45 schools HESD serves, seven are considered program improvement schools. They have received this designation because they have not made "adequate yearly progress" towards their academic goals for two or more years (California Department of Education, n.d.). HESD's large teacher population and diverse student body necessitate not only adequate learning environments for diverse learners, but also supportive teaching environments for well-intentioned educators.

Positionality

For the past eleven years I have been a first or second grade teacher at the same school in the Harmony Elementary School District. Because of this experience, I am familiar with the diverse student body that HESD serves and the major innovations that have been implemented within the district. This experience will aid me as I interact with novice teachers who are experiencing the same district influences and requirements. It is important to note that, although I am familiar with district expectations and requirements, I did not know any of the novice teachers on a personal level, nor did I interact with any of them prior to this study's implementation.

Before my HESD experience I was a Teach for America teacher in Houston, Texas for two years. Prior to my first teaching placement, I had no previous teaching

experience or formal teaching education. When I reflect on the development of my own beliefs about teaching, I do not draw on my teacher education experiences or from my student teaching experiences. My teaching beliefs have largely come from personal pre-teaching experiences and experiences that occurred during my first year of teaching.

My particular perspective gives me specific insight into my research questions, yet may also bias my observations and thus prove to be a limitation. My own initial teaching experiences may color my perspective in that I may unknowingly attribute teachers' beliefs to the personal pre-teaching experiences of my participants rather than to their experiences in a teacher education program. I addressed this potential personal bias through my analysis by first coding for teacher education experiences and identifying patterns in novice teacher beliefs related to teacher education programs. After this initial analysis I moved on to other experiences that aid in the development of teacher beliefs and feelings of effectiveness in the classroom.

My positionality also brings strengths to my research. I became a teacher through an alternative teaching pathway. This different experience gives me insight into the additional school context factors or experiences that might impact beliefs and feelings of effectiveness. Further, I am in a unique position because I am familiar with HESD. My teaching experience within the district gives me insight into school and district working conditions that may affect the beliefs of novice teachers. I hope that my unique positionality aids my research in helpful and telling ways.

Research Design

The majority of previous studies investigating novice teacher beliefs have used

quantitative measures, namely Dembo and Gibson (1984) and Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998). In this study a mixed methods design was employed using quantitative survey measures that have traditionally been used in research on teacher beliefs together with a qualitative approach that includes ethnographic interviews of novice teachers. Qualitative methods were used because including the novice teacher voice enriched and further informed the quantitative results. By including the personal experiences and opinions of novice teachers, additional insights were gained about novice teacher beliefs, and more specifically, beliefs about their effectiveness in the classroom.

The current study consisted of three phases. Phase I included a district survey to all novice teachers regarding their beliefs and their commitment to the teaching profession. Phase II, primarily informed by an ecocultural approach, entailed a set of qualitative interviews with novice teachers. From the data retrieved through the district survey during Phase I, ten novice teachers were selected based on their commitment score, efficacy score, and school context. The selected teachers were then interviewed about their teaching beliefs, their pre and early teaching experiences, their current teaching practices, and their school and community contexts. Phase III of data collection is a content analysis of school documents, including school publications, online school information, and the SARC (School Accountability Report Card) for each school. By using three different methods of data collection, multiple ways to validate the research results were provided, in addition to adding a more nuanced understanding of novice teacher beliefs to the literature. Table two identifies the various methods as they are related to each research question.

Table 2: *Research Question and Methodology Matrix*

Research Questions	Interview 10 Novice Teachers	Novice Teacher Survey	Content Analysis of Secondary Archival Data
What are novice teachers' beliefs about teaching? Specifically, what are their beliefs about their effectiveness in the classroom? How does the school or community context relate to novice teachers' beliefs about teaching?	X		X
What are novice teachers' pre and early teaching experiences? Specifically, how are these experiences related to their beliefs about teaching and their feelings of effectiveness in the classroom?	X	X	X
How do novice teachers talk about their commitment to the teaching profession? What kinds of beliefs and experiences are related to their commitment to the profession?	X	X	

Participant Demographics

School demographics. The study initially elicited the participation of all 45 schools within HESD. Five schools agreed to participate. Three were categorized as having a student body with moderately high social economic status (SES). Within this category 17-25% of the student body qualified for free and reduced lunch and the average household income was \$82,285. The other two schools were categorized as moderately

low social economic status. Within this category 81% of the student body qualified for free and reduced lunch and the average household income was \$62,329. The higher SES category shrunk down to two schools because of participant reluctance to conduct interviews and because the third school was very similar to the first two moderately high SES schools. Table three summarizes the demographics of each school. School demographics include: SES category, the number of students that qualify for free and reduced lunch, student ethnic demographics, school standardized tests scores, and parent interaction (California Department of Education, 2012)

Table 3: *School Context and Community Information Grid*

School Name*	Ethnic Demographics in %	DI	% Of ELL	CST Achievement Scores	% of EDS	School Location- Urban Residential or Urban Commercial	Parent and School Interaction
Kennedy	45 Latino 28.9 Filipino 13.4 White 6.6 African-American 4.2 Asian	Yes	25.5	74% Proficient in LA 85% Proficient in Math Academic Performance Index: 896	17.1	Urban Residential	Active Parent Newsletter Letters From Principal Communication in Spanish and English
Explorer	58.8 Latino 12.5 Filipino 14.9 White 6.8 Asian 5.2 African-American	No	33.7	64% Proficient in LA 70% Proficient in Math Academic Performance Index: 854	24.9	Urban Residential	Very extensive website with lots of parental info. Communication in Spanish and English
Lincoln	89.5 Latino 4.9 White 2.8 Filipino 2.4 African-American 0.3 Asian	No	67.5	59% Proficient in LA 70% Proficient in Math Academic Performance Index: 854	81.8	Urban Commercial	Not a lot of parent correspondence
Riverbank	88.3 Latino 3.1 White 2.2 Filipino 4.6 African-American 0.3 Asian	Yes	67.7	62% Proficient in LA 79% Proficient in Math Academic Performance Index: 858	81.1	Urban Commercial	Not a lot of evident of parent communication or involvement

*All school names are pseudonyms

DI=Dual Immersion Program

ELL=English Language Learners

EDS=Economically Disadvantaged Students

CST=California Standardized Tests

Kennedy and Explorer Elementary fell within the category of moderately high SES while

Riverbank and Lincoln Elementary schools were classified within the moderately low

SES category. In regards to dual immersion programs, there is a school in each SES category that supports a dual immersion program and philosophy. The heading, *Parent and School Interaction*, details the evidence of parent/teacher interaction. The schools that fell within the higher SES category had communication in both Spanish and English, and had a variety of ways to communicate with parents. The schools that fell under the moderately low SES category had less evidence of parental communication.

Novice teacher survey demographics. The survey participants (n=30) represented a diverse range of teaching experiences and pre-teaching experiences. The characteristics of the 30 survey participants are outlined in Table 4. All of the participants were female, working an average of three years as a full time teacher. The majority (83%, n=25) taught in English only classrooms, with five (17%) taught in dual immersion classrooms teaching in Spanish 95% of their day. A third of teachers (37%, n=11) taught within a moderately low Social Economic Status (SES) school.

Table 4: *Characteristics of Survey Participants as Frequency and Percentage*

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Female	30	100
Years Teaching		
1	4	13.3
2	9	30.0
3	3	10.0
4	5	16.7
5	8	26.7
1-2 years teaching	13	43.3
3-5 years teaching	16	53.4
Total	29	96.7
Missing	1	3.3
Dual Immersion Program		
English Only Teacher	25	83.3
Dual Immersion Teacher	5	16.7
SES of Current School		
Moderately low SES	19	63.3
Moderately high SES	11	36.7
Credential School		
Local 4-year University	2	6.7
Local State School	16	53.3
Private For-Profit	9	30.0
Private Non-Profit	3	10.0
Credential Program Type		
Alternative Certification Program	4	13.3
MA Plus Teacher Certification	9	30.0
4 year College Plus 5 th year Credential	17	56.7

In regards to pre-teaching experiences, about half (53%) received their credential from a local state school that include a four-year college program that cumulated in a fifth year of study during which they completed their student teaching and received their certification. The factors outlined in the table above represent most novice teachers within the Harmony Elementary School District, excluding the dual immersion

characteristic. A high number of dual immersion teachers surfaced in the data because two of the five participating schools were dual immersion schools.

Interview participant demographics. Interview participants (n=10) were selected based on efficacy and commitment scores, number of years teaching, and SES levels of current school. Table 5 details their demographic characteristics. Many of the interview participants were finishing up their fifth year of teaching, while only 3 participants had been teaching for two years or less. The participants were divided equally in terms of Dual Immersion and English Only classrooms; likewise they were divided evenly in terms of the SES level of their school. Pre-teaching experiences matched that of the larger survey sample.

Table 5: *Characteristics of Interview Participants as Frequency and Percentage*

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Years Teaching		
1	1	10
2	2	20
3	1	10
4	2	20
5	4	40
Total	10	100
Dual Immersion Program		
English Only Teacher	5	50
Dual Immersion Teacher	5	50
SES of Current School		
Moderately low SES	5	50
Moderately high SES	5	50
Credential School		
Local 4-year University	2	6.7
Local State School	7	53.3
Private For-Profit	1	30.0
Credential Program Type		
Alternative Certification Program	2	13.3
MA Plus Teacher Certification	2	30
4 year College Plus 5 th year	6	56.7
Credential		

In regards to interview participants and their corresponding schools, Table 6 shows the teachers and their work context. The demographic that stands out is number of years teaching. The schools in the moderately low SES category have less experienced novice teachers, with three out of five having two to three years of experience and no one having five years of teaching experience, while the schools in the moderately high SES category have more experienced novice teachers, with four out of five having five years of experience.

Table 6: *Teacher Participants, Participating Schools and Teacher Demographics*

Interview Participant	Participant Demographics				
	Name of School	Years Teaching	Pathway to Certification	Dual Immersion or English Only	SES of School
1. Mariana	Kennedy	5	Alternative Certification Program	DI	Moderately High
2. Rocio	Kennedy	5	Local State University	DI	Moderately High
3. Alexis	Kennedy	1	Local State University	DI	Moderately High
4. Eden	Explorer	5	Local State University	EO	Moderately High
5. Jody	Explorer	5	Master's Plus Certification	EO	Moderately High
6. Cathy	Lincoln	4	Local State University	EO	Moderately Low
7. Vianney	Lincoln	2	Master's Plus Certification	EO	Moderately Low
8. Julie	Lincoln	3	Alternative Certification Program	DI	Moderately Low
9. Marisol	Riverbank	4	Local State University	DI	Moderately Low
10. Carmen	Riverbank	2	Local State University	DI	Moderately Low

Measures

Three methods of data collection were used to address one or more of the three research questions: a participant survey, qualitative interviews and publicly available testing data for each school.

Novice Teacher Survey. The Novice Teacher Survey (NTS) consisted of three components: a demographic questionnaire, the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993), and nine questions regarding commitment toward the teaching profession (see Appendix A). It is estimated to take about 10 minutes to complete. Once permission was secured from the principal, the participant received an e-mail and submitted their responses online. Participants were given an open window to complete surveys, beginning in July 2011 and finishing up the first week of April 2012.

Demographics. The first seven questions ask the participant to list their school site, their first name, their gender, number of years teaching, how they become certified, and where they received their teaching credential. Finally they were asked if they would consider participating in a follow-up interview.

The teacher efficacy scale. The Teacher Efficacy scale (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993) included 10 questions and was designed to elicit information about their feelings of effectiveness in the classroom. Response to each question is along a six-point Likert scale, one being “strongly disagree” and six being “strongly agree.” The Teacher Efficacy scale was reduced into two composite scores, personal teaching efficacy and general teacher efficacy.

Teacher commitment to the profession. The remaining nine questions were included to assess novice teacher commitment to the teaching profession on a six-point

Likert scale. The first seven questions used a six-point Likert scale, and the last two questions provided multiple-choice answers. These nine questions were adopted from the School and Staffing Survey (2007-2008) distributed by the National Center of Education Statistics . The SASS collects data on principals' and teachers' perceptions of school climate, problems in their schools, teacher compensation, district hiring practices and basic characteristics of the student population once every four years.

Novice teacher interviews. Qualitative interviews are ideal for extracting information from participants such as personal histories, in-depth information, and knowledge or beliefs (Lecompte & Schensul, 2010). Qualitative interviews contextualize novice teacher's beliefs within their ecocultural settings. The interviews provided a broader scope of novice teacher beliefs in general, including the beliefs that novice teachers have about their effectiveness in the classroom. Lastly, the interviews lead to a deeper understanding of how school and community contextual factors affect the self-efficacy beliefs of novice teachers.

Ten novice teachers were selected and agreed to participate in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. These interviews were held at convenient locations of the participants choosing. Each interview was recorded with an audio recorder to be transcribed at a later date. The interview consisted of 14 guiding questions (see Appendix B) and usually lasted about an hour and a half.

Initial data reduction of the Novice Teacher Interviews (NTIs) began with the field notes that were collected immediately following each NTI. Case histories were also created for each participant detailing their pathway to teaching, their teaching narrative, and aspects of their story that were unique or surprising. Data reduction continued with

initial transcription. Once the interviews were transcribed, an initial reading of the complete transcription was conducted to get an initial general interpretation of the participants interview. After reviewing each interview additional annotations of some of the bigger themes or ideas that surfaced throughout the participants responses were also recorded. While making these annotations, the following apriori codes were applied: pre-teaching experiences, feeling of effectiveness or self-efficacy, early teaching experiences, school and community contextual factors. After coding for these apriori, an emergent coding process took place looking for categories and patterns related to the principle three research questions.

School documents. Public testing data came primarily from the School Accountability Report Card (SARC) data found on the HESD website. Since 1988 all schools receiving state funding are required to put together a SARC and present the community and parents with each school's data (California Department of Education, 2011). The SARC is a way for schools to communicate how they are making progress towards their academic goals. A SARC includes many things about the school in question. For example, it presents school and climate safety information, class size, academic data, student demographics, teacher and staff information, and fiscal and expenditure data. More specifically, the student demographic data and the academic data were used to create school profiles for each school with participating novice teachers.

The archival data reviewed includes the SARC data for each school (School Accountability Report Card), individual school websites, district websites that profile each schools, and school generated documents such as newsletters and parent letters. As these documents were reviewed, specific contextual information that provided insight

about the particular settings of each school and community was categorized. To organize this information the Context and Community Information Grid (CCGI, see Appendix C) was created where the following information about each school was recorded: ethnic demographics, student home language, achievement scores, socioeconomic status of students, and residential or urban location.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred during the 2011-2012 school year. Although data collection included three separate phases, one phase did not end before the next one started. There was some overlapping of the phases as the Novice Teacher Surveys came in and the Novice Teacher Interviews were started. To begin Phase One, a sufficient pool of novice teachers was needed to administer the Novice Teacher Survey. Because it was decided that 10-novice teachers would be interviewed during Phase II of data collection, 30 completed novice teacher surveys was sufficient. To illicit school participation, an e-mailed letter was sent to the principals of all 45 schools twice over a four-week time period. The letter included the research plan and intentions, in addition to a request for their school's participation in the study. Of the 45 schools, 14 responded, with five agreeing to participate. Once permission was granted to contact the teachers at a given school, two mass e-mails to all the teachers regardless of teaching experience were sent out. In the subject field of the e-mail, the participation of only those teachers that have worked five years or less was elicited. An additional reference to the participation of novice teachers in the introduction of the e-mail was also made. At the end of the e-mail there was a link to the online survey if they choose to participate. Although, numerous

mass e-mails were sent to the teachers at each school, a limited number of teachers responded. At four of the five schools, the researcher asked the principals to resend an e-mail with a link to my survey in an effort to elicit even more participation. Additionally, for one school the researcher spoke at their staff meeting and this brought in a few more survey participants.

Once the surveys began coming in, Phase II of data collection began. Each participant was contacted and a one-on-one interview was arranged and conducted in a convenient location that was suitable for the research participant. Each interview was audio-recorded and lasted approximately an hour and a half. Immediately following the interview, field notes were written summarizing the interview and outlining initial thoughts on constructs and patterns to consider later in more detail. After the completion of each interview, the interview was transcribed using a transcribing company, Fox Transcribe and coded using Dedoose (2012) for future analysis.

Phase Three of data collection consisted of an analysis of school documents. School documents included school documents, websites, or published material that described, either implicitly or explicitly, the school and community context. Some examples are SARC (School Accountability Report Cards) reports, city and neighborhood demographical information, and school newsletters. These documents were reviewed and school profiles were created for each school detailing their demographics, academic progress, and their community context. Additional notes were made on the school and community context graphic organizer (see Appendix C) for each school site that agreed to participate in my study.

Pilot Testing

Before the research study began, the Novice Teacher Survey and the Novice Teacher Interview were piloted. The survey pilot study intended to find out the kind of responses the interview questions elicited before actual research began. The pilot survey allowed for changes in the survey questions to be made that better elicited the information needed to answer the research questions. The pilot interview and survey were instrumental in designing and making modifications to final versions of both the interview and survey. None of the data from the pilot surveys or interviews were included in the final research study.

Data Analysis Procedures

Once the qualitative and quantitative data was reduced, patterns across data sources were studied in order to address each of the research questions. The following is a general description of the initial analytical approach in response to each research question.

Research question 1: What are novice teachers' beliefs about teaching? Specifically, what are their beliefs about their effectiveness in the classroom? How does the school or community context relate to novice teachers' beliefs about teaching?

Two data sources and both qualitative and quantitative data analysis were used to answer this question. The first data source was the Novice Teacher Interviews (NTIs) and the second data source was the Content Analysis of Secondary Archival Data. An initial understanding of early teaching beliefs, including beliefs about effectiveness, and teaching context came from an early review of the transcripts using apriori codes. As

these categories became too narrow for the variety of responses, these general codes were expanded upon to better represent the participants' comments. With a more concise list of codes, the transcripts were reviewed again and comparisons were made as patterns emerged across participants. Additional comparisons were made between the codes related to early teaching beliefs and the school context that each teacher experiences. To ensure the correctness of initial interpretations, the research questions and theoretical frameworks were consistently reviewed to validate accuracy. The comparison between the NTI and the Content Analysis of Secondary Archival data allowed for some conclusions about novice teachers' beliefs and how those beliefs related to a novice teacher's teaching context.

Research Question #2: What are novice teachers' pre and early teaching experiences? Specifically, how are these experiences related to their beliefs about teaching and their feeling of effectiveness in the classroom?

All three data sources were used to answer this question. An understanding of the pre and early teaching experiences of novice teachers was initially gained through the Novice Teacher Survey (NTS). The two demographic questions that asked about how the teacher was certified and where they received their certification helped to orient the principal investigator as to the kinds of pathways that participants went through to become teachers. Next, the NTI offered a broader understanding of novice teachers' pre and early experiences by asking specific questions about their path to becoming a teacher, and why they became teachers. The NTI also included questions about their beliefs about effectiveness in the classroom. Lastly, the Content Analysis of Secondary Archival data was looked at in conjunction with the NTI data and the NTS data to see if the particular

context or experiences that a novice teacher has at a given school is related to their early experiences or feelings of effectiveness.

Research Questions #3: How do novice teachers talk about their commitment to the teaching profession? What kinds of beliefs and experiences are related to their commitment to the profession?

Both the NTS and the NTI were used to answer the third question. Included in the NTS are questions about commitment that shed light on the level of commitment that each participant has for teaching. Additionally, there are questions that appeared on the NTI that are designed to explore the commitment of each participant and the kinds of beliefs and experiences that might have resulted in more or less commitment towards the teaching profession. In the initial analysis of the NTI, comments were coded that related to teacher commitment as a way to determine how novice teachers talk about their commitment to the teaching profession. During this analysis, beliefs and experiences that might have lead to the level of commitment that the participant feels towards the teaching profession were also investigated.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to better understand the attrition rate of novice teachers during their first five years of teaching. Chapter III introduced the study by outlining the school district where the study was conducted, providing information about the participants, and giving detailed information about each phase of data collection. Additionally, there was a thorough explanation of the three measures used during data collection and analysis. Finally, Chapter III clarified the procedures of data analysis by

revisiting each research question. In the next three chapters the findings and a discussion of those findings are presented. Chapter IV begins with a descriptive and multivariate analysis of the novice teacher survey, the novice teacher interviews, and the school documents. Chapter V presents a descriptive analysis of the major areas of research embedded in the research questions.

Chapter IV: Quantitative Findings: Efficacy, Commitment, and Pre-Teaching Experiences

Novice teacher experiences, commitment, and beliefs are better understood through an ecocultural lens. Ecocultural theory takes into consideration the contexts and different experiences that each novice teacher brings to her classroom. Within each teaching context, there are many aspects of teaching that may affect their decision to leave or stay in the profession, including the teaching context itself, their pre and early teaching experiences, their personal teaching beliefs, and their feelings of effectiveness in the classroom. Previously, these areas of research had been conducted by using the self-efficacy construct, quantitative methods, and did not include the voice of the novice teachers themselves. This study aims to present a more nuanced understanding of novice teacher commitment to the profession by including the voices of novice teachers, using an ecocultural perspective and a mixed methods approach.

Chapter VI presents an analysis of the Novice Teacher Survey (NTS). This analysis revealed many factors about the survey and corresponding interview participants. Among these factors was the number of years teaching, pre-teaching experiences, the SES of each school, and dual immersion or English only teaching placements. These factors, along with each teaching context, illuminate the ecocultural context within which novice teachers learn and grow. The multivariate analysis of the participant survey provides information about novice teachers, their efficacy and commitment, in light of their demographics. This information provides a backdrop for the participant interviews. A descriptive analysis of the participant interviews and corresponding findings are discussed in the following chapter.

Novice Teacher Commitment and Efficacy Scores

The NTS has two sections that asked the participants about their level of teaching efficacy and their level of commitment to the teaching profession. On average the efficacy and commitment scores of the novice teacher participants were moderate to high with mean scores for efficacy and commitment at 4.51 and 4.87 respectively among the total survey sample (n=30) and 4.34 and 4.76 respectively among the interview sample (n=10). Neither scale showed exceptional low values in efficacy or commitment. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics. It is important to note that novice teachers that would typically fill out an online survey may also feel relatively efficacious and pleased about teaching. It is also worth noting that the number of novice teachers working within a moderately low SES context is nearly double that of novice teachers working at schools with moderately high SES. This participant characteristic is supported by the current research (Jacob, 2007). Moderately low SES urban schools are more likely to staff a large number of novice teachers. This is primarily due to the teaching challenges associated with urban or moderately low SES schools, including high numbers of minority or ELL students, poverty, and minimal administrative support.

Table 7: *Descriptive statistics for efficacy and commitment scores*

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
<i>Survey sample</i>					
Efficacy	30	3.30	5.90	4.51	.64
Commitment	30	3.00	6.00	4.86	.83
<i>Interview sample</i>					
Efficacy	10	3.30	5.90	4.34	.92
Commitment	10	3.29	5.57	4.76	.86

Multivariate Analysis of Survey Data

Multivariate analysis of the survey data was conducted to determine differences in efficacy and commitment scores by demographic factors. Participant demographics include the number of years teaching, the SES of their home school, their credential program type, and whether they taught in a dual immersion or English only school. See Table eight for means and standard deviations for each demographic variable.

Table 8: *Mean Efficacy and Commitment Scores by Participant Demographics*

	Commitment M (SD)	Efficacy M (SD)
<i>Years Teaching Experience</i>		
1-2 Years (n=13)	5.22 (.71)	4.36 (.59)
3-5 Years (n=16)	4.54 (.81)	4.60 (.68)
<i>SES of School</i>		
Low SES (n=19)	4.87 (.84)	4.55 (.62)
High SES (n=11)	4.45 (.71)	4.86 (.84)
<i>Credential Program Type</i>		
Alternative Certification (n=4)	4.10 (.24)	4.78 (.56)
MA plus (n=9)	4.73 (.95)	4.12 (.38)
4-Year College + 5 th Year (n=17)	4.88 (.87)	4.66 (.70)
<i>Dual Immersion</i>		
English Only (n=25)	4.84 (.87)	4.50 (.53)
Dual Immersion (n=5)	4.97 (.67)	4.60 (1.14)

The following sections discuss each participant demographic in light of efficacy and commitment to the profession.

Efficacy, commitment, and number of years teaching. To study efficacy, commitment to the profession, and number of years teaching, a Pearson product moment correlation was conducted to analyze associations between efficacy, commitment to the profession, and number of years teaching. Among novice teachers, the number of years

teaching (range 1-5 years) was negatively associated with the total commitment score ($r = -.45, p < .05$) such that the more teaching experience a teacher had, the less committed they were to the teaching profession. There were no significant associations between number of years teaching and the total efficacy score ($r=.19, p>.05$) nor between total efficacy and commitment scores ($r=.04, p>.05$).

Two surprises surfaced when looking at efficacy, commitment, and number of years teaching. First, is the relationship between number of years taught and commitment to the teaching profession. It makes sense that novice teachers who have been teaching for fewer years would potentially be more committed to the profession. The newest teachers have the fewest years since completing a teacher preparation program, they are likely passionate and excited about teaching kids, yet have little experience upon which to base their perceptions. What is surprising is the commitment level of novice teachers that have been teaching for three to five years. Organizational research suggests that with each subsequent year of teaching, a novice teacher would become more committed (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Every year a teacher accumulates experiences, resources, and instructional strategies that provide them with more ease in the classroom. When looking at the NTS data, the exact opposite was evident.

The second surprise is the lack of association between self-efficacy and number of years teaching. These results are surprising, however they could be explained by the small sample size or by the truncated range of years teaching. Previous self-efficacy studies indicate that the number of years teaching is positively associated with a higher level of efficacy for teaching (Glickman & Tamashiro, 1982; Tschannen-Moran &

Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). The NTS results show that there was no significant association between the number of years teaching and the efficacy score of the participants.

Efficacy, commitment, and SES of school. When studying commitment, efficacy, and school context, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to look at group differences between efficacy and commitment scores based on the SES level of the school. Current research looking at low-SES schools and teacher commitment reveals that low-SES schools are typically staffed by teachers indicating lower levels of commitment (Ingersoll, 2003; Jacob, 2007). This accounts for a high mobility rate among teachers and a high level of teacher attrition at moderately low SES schools. Surprisingly, the NTS data indicates that there were no group differences in efficacy ($F(1,27) = .06, p > .05$) or commitment scores ($F(1,27) = .08, p > .05$) based on the SES level of the school groups. There were also no group differences in efficacy ($F(4, 29) = .13, p > .05$) or commitment ($F(4, 29) = .24, p > .05$) scores based on the actual current school placement.

Efficacy, commitment, and credential program type. An important component of the current study is the role of pre-teaching experiences. The quality of pre-teaching experiences plays a role in the development of self-efficacy beliefs and how committed a teacher feels toward the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). However, an ANOVA conducted on the NTS scores and pre-teaching experiences indicate that there were no significant group differences in efficacy ($F(3, 29) = 2.09, p > .05$) or commitment ($F(3, 29) = .60, p > .05$) scores based on the type of university where the credential was received. Additionally, there were no statistically significant group differences in efficacy ($F(2,29) = 2.71, p = .08$) or commitment ($F(2, 29) = .28, p > .05$) scores based on the type of credential program.

Although no significant relationships were found, the results for type of credential program were approaching was $p = .10$ and needed further investigation. Each credential program type and their respective efficacy scores were separated and analyzed. The results for this analysis indicate that teachers that received their certifications through a Master's plus certification program had lower efficacy scores than those that received their certifications from a four year plus 5th year for certification program. This result is puzzling because a Masters program would be more rigorous and better prepare education students for the teaching profession. It stands to reason that this thorough preparation would lead to higher efficacy beliefs among novice teachers. Perhaps their comprehensive teacher preparation program gave them a more accurate evaluation of themselves and their effectiveness, which led to lower feelings of efficacy. However, the survey and interview participants that graduated from a four year university and then went on to complete a fifth year to become certified had higher self-efficacy scores than their Master degree counterparts. The high number of dual immersion teachers may also play a role in this discrepancy. The dual immersion teachers were those that graduated from a local state school with a Liberal Arts degree and went on to specialize in a specific subject for their fifth year and in this way also received their credential. The dual immersion teachers specialized in Bilingual Education and specifically mentioned during the interviews that they found their pre-teaching education to be especially helpful and very pertinent to their current teaching position. They mention that they use the strategies taught to them in their credentialing program on a daily basis. The Masters Degree students may not have benefited from such a specific specialization that they were able to use successfully upon gaining their first teaching job. Moreover, it has been discussed

previously that the efficacy measure used to determine the efficacy scores may not be a valid measure for this group of novice teachers. The novice teachers in this study receive many supports that are absent for most novice teachers. Additionally, novice teachers may think about their practice differently because of their lack of experience. It is possible that as they compare themselves to teachers that have more experience, and because they are learning at such a fast rate, their efficacy scores are typically lower. These lower scores may have skewed the data.

The results for the ANOVA analysis are surprising as the survey participants received their credentials in three different ways: (1) an alternative certification program, (2) a four year state university with a fifth year for certification program and (3) a Master's plus certification program. These different paths to certification should have indicated sizeable differences in efficacy. Recent research on self-efficacy, commitment and credential type among novice teachers states that teachers who receive their credentials through a four year university or a master's program tend to have higher levels of efficacy and commitment than teachers who receive their credential through alternative means (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). Based on this research, one might expect the four participants that received their credentials through alternative programs would have shown lower levels of commitment or self-efficacy; however this was not the case.

Efficacy and Commitment Among Dual Immersion Teachers. Because half of the interview participants taught in a dual immersion setting, and the interview data collected indicated a markedly high level of self-efficacy among dual immersion teachers, an ANOVA was conducted to look at group differences in NTS scores between

dual immersion teachers and English only teachers. There were no significant group differences in efficacy ($F(1, 29) = 0.11, p > .05$) or commitment ($F(1, 29) = .09, p > .05$) scores between English Only or Dual Immersion teachers.

Discussion

The multivariate analysis revealed important and surprising details about the study's participants and their demographics. These analyses indicated that there were no associations between self-efficacy and commitment, or differences in scores across SES of home school, credential program type, or whether the teacher was dual immersion or English only. These findings are contrary to what has been found elsewhere in the self-efficacy and teacher commitment literature. Alternative certification pathways have been found to foster less commitment and a lower sense of efficacy among novice teachers. Additionally, teachers that go through a Masters plus teacher certification program often have a higher sense of self-efficacy and are more committed to the profession (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2002). Other researchers have also found a positive association between self-efficacy and teacher commitment such that the more self-efficacious a teacher is, the more committed they are to the profession (Coladarci, 1992; Evans & Tribble, 1986). Moreover, the socio-economic status of a school has been linked to commitment and self-efficacy such that schools that have moderately low SES typically have less committed teachers (Jacob, 2007) and exhibit lower levels of self-efficacy (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008).

There are two possible explanations for the discrepancy between the research literature and the current findings. First, for the participants in this study, the self-efficacy

measure could lack validity in its evaluation of novice teacher's efficacy beliefs. This finding surfaced when comparing the efficacy scores with the interview data. The participants with the lowest efficacy scores (Rocio, Carmen, and Vianney) expressed comments that indicated high levels of self-efficacy in relationship to their teaching practice. This demonstrates that the self-efficacy measure most often used for all teachers may not be applicable to novice teachers. They have less experience upon which to evaluate themselves. Moreover, because of the many challenges they face their first years of teaching, and their limited ability to address these challenges, they may judge themselves more harshly than a teacher with multiple years of experience. The second explanation can also be found by comparing the interview data with the survey data. The schools that chose to participate in the current study were atypical in that they provided a variety of supports to their teachers. Among these are: protected collaboration time built into their weekly schedule, math and reading coaches, support staff (psychologists, counselors and resource teachers), and administrative observations. The interview data indicates that these supports neutralize the typical challenges that most novice teachers face their first years of teaching. Perhaps these supports also minimize the effects of credential type and SES of school on teaching efficacy and commitment to the profession. Both the survey and interview data demonstrate the need for mixed methods studies that couple widely used quantitative measures with open-ended qualitative interviews to better understand the explanations behind a survey response.

The most surprising finding was a negative correlation between commitment scores and number of years teaching. Teachers that had been working for one to two years were more committed than teachers that had been working three to five years. This

finding is surprising because as a novice teacher gains more experience, their sense of self-efficacy goes up (Glickman & Tamashiro, 1982) and so should their level of commitment. An explanation for this finding can be found by reviewing the interview data. The teachers that had been working for three to five years were also designated as “temporary” teachers. This designation means that they have no job security and they must reapply every year at the same school for their current position. It is possible that during the first few years of teaching, teachers remain passionate about the profession, however they become uncertain as to how long they can keep on working without job security in the current context of teacher employment. The teacher interview portion of this study provides important qualitative data contextualizing this finding and will be presented in the following chapters.

Chapter V: Findings: A Mixed Methods Approach

Chapter V offers a descriptive analysis of the participant interview data while concurrently including quantitative analysis where appropriate. The research questions and corresponding domains frame the discussion. The principal domains embedded in the research questions are Novice Teacher Beliefs, Feelings of Effectiveness, Professional Commitment, Pre and Early Teacher Experiences, and Community Context. Each construct domain will be described and discussed in light of the participant demographics presented in Chapter IV. Additionally, each domain will be examined through an ecocultural lens, focusing on the setting or context that pertains to each domain. Once the principal domains are discussed, each section concludes with an analysis of the research question itself.

Research Question #1: Teacher Beliefs, Feelings of Effectiveness, and Community Context

The first research question asks, “What are novice teachers’ beliefs about teaching? Specifically, what are their beliefs about their effectiveness in the classroom? How does the school or community context relate to novice teachers’ beliefs about teaching?” This research question includes the domains Novice Teacher Beliefs, Feelings of Effectiveness, and Community Context. Each domain will be discussed separately beginning with Novice Teacher Beliefs.

Novice teacher beliefs. To elicit the beliefs of novice teachers, the question, “What does teaching mean to you?” was asked of all the interview participants. In

response to this question the participants discussed their beliefs in terms of how they interpreted their role in the classroom. Although each role interpretation will be discussed separately, there was considerable overlap among participants. Most of the participants mentioned two or three role interpretations, affirming the multi-faceted nature of teacher beliefs. There were two teachers that stood out in terms of the number of beliefs they mentioned. For example, Mariana mentioned all five-role interpretations in reference to her beliefs, while Jody only mentioned one.

The most prominent interpretation was centered on the academic and social development of their students. Ninety percent believed that their role in the classroom was to provide their students with the academic and social skills needed to be successful in school and in their lives. For example, Julie says

I guess you know they're just like a big ball of clay and you just have to mold their minds to help them be ready for not just even high school but for college and that they are prepared socially and academically in the real world because we're living in the 21st century so that pressure is on them to be college graduates and it starts from kindergarten, helping them and molding them.

Another participant, Vianney, agrees with Julie when she says,

That's one thing that it means, because obviously you're investing in the academics and the knowledge of the kids and helping them become critical thinkers and how to read things critically, how to write things critically, how to think about math in different...

A third participant, Jody states

I want to give them life skills that can make them have that chance to be as successful as their potential allows them to be, so I feel like my job this year is to build their confidence, and their skill set and give them the tools so that they can be as successful as they are able to be...and that is both educational and social. So, they feel valued as a person too.

These excerpts reveal that novice teachers interpret their principal role in the classroom to be teaching their students the appropriate grade level academic and social skills. Jody sums up this sentiment when she wants her students to feel “valued as people too,” and that she wants her students to be successful both academically and socially.

Aside from the core interpretation that teaching is about the academic and social development of kids, there were two more nuanced interpretations interwoven throughout the novice teacher comments. These interpretations are concrete examples of how a novice teacher’s beliefs are mutually created as they interact with their microsystem. For example, of the ten participants, six mentioned that teaching includes filling a variety of social roles. Within this interpretation two role-related foci emerged. The first relates to the different social roles that teachers fill on a daily basis. An example of this interpretation is Julie’s comments. She says,

I have...well everything. I'm the teacher, I'm the mother, I'm the caretaker, I'm the throw-up picker-upper, everything (laughs). You have to change the roles with everything and the confidence and the planning. You have to have all of those roles to become a teacher and its just not something that you're teaching them, maybe a lesson, you have to cater to them and to hear them. All issues that come up, we have to listen to them and that they know that you are there for them and that they can count on you when they come into your classroom.

For these teachers, their interpretation of teaching stemmed from the many social roles they filled throughout their teaching day. The teachers that indicated this interpretation were both dual immersion and English only teachers, fell within the three to five year teaching bracket, and were more likely to teach within a moderately high SES context. The novice teacher demographics suggests that this interpretation stems from having a little more teaching experience. It is possible that once you have taught for at

least 3 years, you are able to define the profession in a way that more less experienced novice teachers cannot. The SES category of the participants suggests that the variety of roles a teacher fills is not dependent on the economic status or demographics of their students. The kind of roles may vary depending on the student body, but that teachers fill roles outside of their teaching role is universal across school SES categories in this study.

The second role-related interpretation relates to being “a good role model” for students. For example, Marisol states, “Also, being a teacher means being an example. I want them to see myself as an example for them to follow their dreams and go to college and educate themselves.” For Marisol, she wants to show her students that like her, they can also achieve their dreams. She sees herself as a model for her students to follow. The participants that indicated this interpretation taught within a dual immersion context and could be found equally in moderately high and moderately low SES categories. It is important to note that the dual immersion teachers in this study shared many of the same personal characteristics of their students. For example, they were both immigrants in a foreign land that spoke Spanish and they were from the same Spanish speaking country. Moreover, they had experienced poverty in Mexico just as their students might be experiencing poverty in the United States. They could relate to their students’ families both linguistically and culturally. This belief suggests that the dual immersion teachers saw themselves as “role models” for their students as they moved through some of the same personal and educational experiences that they themselves had experienced as children.

An additional distinction that was made as novice teachers interpreted their roles was that of empowering and inspiring students. Half of the participants mentioned this

interpretation in relation to their role in the classroom. Within this interpretation two distinct groups became apparent. The first believed their role to be that of inspiring or empowering their students to take ownership of their learning. Mariana's comment supports this belief when she says, "Just making it easy for them to learn. To use me as a resource, not more than... I think that once you empower a child to learn, you give them the tools. That's the important thing for me as a teacher." Vianney also says, "I have to be an inspiration to them, otherwise it's almost going to mean nothing. It's going to be...being at school is going to be a job to them if they don't feel inspired, if they don't feel motivated." For these teachers it was important for them to not only teach their students skills but also inspire and empower them to learn. This belief was seen more dominantly among teachers that had been teaching for three to five years, however it seemed to carry little significance for SES context and for teachers that worked in a dual immersion context.

The second group that referenced student empowerment discussed their teaching from a social justice perspective. These teachers were especially committed to getting the students that were most at risk for school academic challenges to take ownership of their learning and to feel empowered. They saw this empowerment as a way for their students to overcome the injustices they were experiencing in their lives. Cathy makes reference to her social justice teacher beliefs when she says:

You know, that's why I wanted to teach here though. I wanted to teach the kids that their parents aren't willing to fight for them. I'm more than welcome to and so that's why, that's why I've always been drawn to this area. I did my student teaching down here and all that stuff so I know what the community is like.

Cathy is expressing a belief that teaching has a social justice component to it, and that her teaching is a way for her to support or “fight” for her students that are experiencing social inequalities. The participants that made reference to social justice taught within a moderately low SES context and were more likely to be English only teachers. This suggests that the English only teacher participants that serve economically disadvantaged students are more aware of their students’ social hardships and view education as a way for their students to rise above the social obstacles they face.

As we study a novice teacher within her ecocultural context, her teaching beliefs are of principal importance. They are an integral part of her microsystem, the principal context within which she learns and grows. This context can be readily identified as a teacher’s classroom. A novice teacher’s beliefs, and more specifically role definitions, along with student characteristics, class size, and activity structure all interact in ways that mutually affect each other. A novice teacher’s beliefs are modified and developed as she teaches and interacts with her students. This was seen more readily among moderately high and low SES and among dual immersion and English only teachers. Dual immersion teachers interacting with students that shared their own cultural and linguistic heritage affirmed their belief that teaching was about being a good role model or example for their students. Likewise, English only teachers that worked in a moderately low SES context recognized the social disparities their students were experiencing and identified with the belief that teaching is a form of social justice. In the preceding section a discussion of how novice teacher develop feelings of effectiveness is presented.

Feelings of effectiveness. This section examines teacher beliefs about effectiveness by looking at the participants as a group. Participant demographics were explored in reference to feelings of effectiveness; however no patterns were found with the exception of dual immersion teachers in both moderately low and high SES contexts. A discussion of dual immersion teachers, SES context, and their feelings of effectiveness conclude the section.

Before beginning it is important to note that all of the participants made several comments that indicated a certain level of general personal efficacy. These comments seem to demonstrate that the participants felt effective in two ways. First, they felt effective as individuals, outside of the teaching profession. Second, they generally felt effective as teachers despite their novice teacher status. An example of feeling personally effective is Marisol's comment. She says, "I'm organized, I like to plan things ahead of time and maybe, I plan too much but it's okay because you never know." Another example is Eden's comments. She says, "I feel like for me I'm pretty organized" or when Carmen states "I'm very reliable...Um, if I say I'm gonna do something I do it." These comments indicate a certain level of personal efficacy that the novice teacher would bring to any profession. Remarks that demonstrate general feelings of effectiveness in regards to their teaching practice are Rocio's and Jody's comments. Rocio says, "I do have kids reading and writing so I'm like, 'I am not doing such of a bad job.'" Additionally, Jody says, "I would never want to repeat that year [first year], even though I actually look at it fondly, and I think it was a successful year." Rocio's and Jody's comments were general but did reflect feelings of confidence towards their teaching ability in the classroom. These more general comments about effectiveness are important because they serve as an

important backdrop in her microsystem. These personal feelings of effectiveness affect her pre and early teaching experiences, her development of confidence towards teaching, and her teacher beliefs.

In terms of beliefs about teaching or instructional effectiveness, the teachers spoke about classroom effectiveness in two ways. They discussed it in terms of personal experiences they had with their own K-12 teachers and they spoke about it in terms of early teaching experiences that made them better teachers in the classroom. The personal K-12 experiences that added to their feelings of effectiveness will be discussed first.

Personal K-12 Experiences that Lead to Feelings of Effectiveness. In discussing their decision to become a teacher, nine of the ten interview participants referenced their own K-12 education. As they shared their stories they often talked about prior teachers that inspired them to become teachers themselves. They viewed these teachers as effective and they wanted to emulate them in their own teaching. Of the 10 participants, half made direct references connecting their past teachers to their current practice. An example of this connection is when Jody says,

Oh, absolutely, I remember all of my teachers, I had growing up and I think about the best things that I really enjoyed and remember the most um...and I have taken some of those ideas from my own experience and put them into the classroom, not in many cases, like a math counts program that I started this year for sixth and seventh grade was something I did in middle school. Um...so many other projects and ideas that I felt were valuable, I tried to put back in the classroom.

In this comment Jody is recognizing the effective strategies that her prior teachers used with her and she is incorporating them to her own instruction. Another example of how a participant views a past teacher as effective is Rocio's comments. Rocio says,

She always made teaching fun. We were working in small groups and doing lots of interactive things. She did a lot of group work which back then you didn't even know what that was which she used to do that a lot. I said, "You know what? This is fun. I love it." That was the best grade ever. Now, I was like, "How can I do that? I want to try to do that with my kids.

Rocio is sharing her past learning experiences and in this way shares her view of an effective teacher. She has fond memories of her teacher and she wants to be the same kind of person for her students. Half of the participants mentioned their own K-12 experiences in relation to their beliefs about effectiveness. They saw their past teachers as effective and wanted to incorporate some of their same teaching strategies.

Experiences that lead to feelings of effectiveness. There were three kinds of experiences that stood out across all ten interviews. Every single teacher mentioned professional development or observing other teachers as a way to incorporate new and valuable strategies into their instruction. These new strategies made them feel more effective in the classroom. Mariana reflects this sentiment when she says, "I am a big time follower of Rick Morris, and Scott Purdy and I followed them. I started with some of their ideas. I adapted them to fit me, and I carried those on." Vianney talks about how professional development has made her feel more effective when she maintains, "I see myself improving with the professional development I'm getting at my school, so I know it's working... I'm greatly improving as a teacher because of what we have there." These comments demonstrate that as novice teachers moved through their first five years of teaching they felt professional development was crucial to helping them feel more effective in their teaching.

Another experience that made them feel more effective in the classroom was collaboration with their colleagues. Ninety percent of the participants' referenced collaboration as an experience that made them feel more confident in the classroom. Mariana states, "this year, we have two-and-a-half hour of collaboration time a week so that's really good. Getting ideas from everybody, that's really good." Julie concurs when she says,

I think collaboration with our grade level has definitely improved our teaching and just sharing our ideas about what we did or what didn't work, also having discussions... last year our focus was on the GRR model and how we should implement that and so we did a lot of side-by-sides and watching films with other teachers, and then we shared our books for reading and so everybody was trained...

Mariana and Julie voiced the sentiments of many of the participants. They had time set aside by their administration that was protected collaboration time. During this time they planned for the next week, shared ideas, and were supported by their more experienced colleagues. This finding is contrary to the current research depicting the experience of novice teachers. Novice teachers typically experience feelings of insecurity, isolation, and self-doubt (Herbert & Worthy, 2001). The novice teachers in this study had many and consistent opportunities to collaborate with their grade level adding to their feelings of effectiveness in the classroom.

Successful experiences with children was also referenced by many of the participants (70%) as an experience that made them feel more effective in the classroom. These successful experiences would help them later on in their teaching career as they adapted to their new role as classroom teacher. Examples of successful experiences with children were being a swimming coach in high school, tutoring neighborhood kids, or

being a part-time collaboration teacher. Vianney speaks to this experience well when she says,

You know what really helped me was being a support teacher. Looking at my first year at [local elementary] as a support teacher, I thought I was ready. I was gung-ho to be a teacher, but I learned a lot about the curriculum, just what it's like to be working in a school, the expectations. Then when I got to [local elementary], I learned a lot about confidence as a teacher, timing as a teacher, professionalism, and management.

Rocio agrees with Vianney's sentiment when she says,

I loved it because I learned so much being in impact teacher 'cause everything was based on reading. To me, the best thing I could teach was reading. I kept on teaching reading....I felt so confident. That really, really helped me.

The participants felt that prior successful experiences helped get them ready for the classroom by teaching them instructional strategies, classroom management and school professionalism. These acquired experiences would later aid them as they dealt with the new challenges of teaching.

Novice teacher's feelings of effectiveness can be examined in three different ways. First, they can be looked at in terms of general feelings of effectiveness. These are aspects of the novice teacher's personality that they would bring to any circumstance or profession. Examples of general feeling of effectiveness are being organized, well planned, and warm and friendly. An additional way novice teachers feel effective is through their personal K-12 teaching experiences. Many participants had a teacher that they felt was effective based on their own experiences in the classroom. The novice teacher looked up to them and tried to emulate them in their own classrooms. The last way that feelings of effectiveness can be studied is in terms of specific experiences.

These experiences are professional development, collaborating with peers, and prior successful experiences with children. The discussion will now turn to feelings of effectiveness and the two groups, dual immersion and English only teachers and teachers that work in high and moderately low SES schools.

Dual immersion and English only teachers. Dual immersion teachers stood out as a group that was particularly efficacious towards their practice and in delivering instruction to their students. Dual immersion teachers taught in both high and moderately low SES school categories. For dual immersion teachers that taught in the moderately high SES category, their feelings of effectiveness stemmed from the fact that they had a low number of Spanish Speaking students, however their students were still able to read and write in Spanish by the end of the year. Rocio discusses this point when she says,

Right now in dual immersion, like one third of my students are Spanish speakers, but the other ones aren't. So when those kids were reading and writing, I knew I was the one that did that. I think that was something that encouraged me more. I knew I was doing my job because, obviously, parents can't help them at home because they don't speak the language. Okay, they're reading, they're answering comprehension questions, they're writing opinion papers this year and I'm like, 'Wow, I taught them that, I did that. I did this.' I changed them."

Rocio feels confident in her instruction because she is taking predominately English speakers and making them bilingual. Likewise, dual immersion teachers that worked in the moderately low SES school category also felt effective in their teaching. They were able to relate to students and their families because they shared the same personal experiences. This shared experience made them feel more effective with their students.

Mariana speaks to this claim when she talks about the community that she serves. She says,

We have a large Hispanic population and I think that is a plus for me because I can relate to them very easily and they can relate to me. That's a positive.

Heather: You mentioned the parents before. The positive interaction with the parents?

Marisol: Uh-hmm. (Affirmative). Because we understand each other and we never have Hispanic teachers and a lot of respect and all that. A culture with differences but we all know that it's so nice to relate with one another from the same country.

Marisol is voicing her confidence in relation to how she is able to interact with the parents because she is an insider to their culture. This teaching confidence is related to her dual immersion status and the SES status of her school. The novice teacher interviews reveal that dual immersion teachers experience a high level of efficacy in the classroom regardless of whether they are working within a high or moderately low SES context.

How novice teachers develop their feelings of effectiveness is important to study because it provides insight into how novice teachers learn and grow within their microsystem—the classroom and their mesosystem—the school context. Within a novice teacher's microsystem, her general feelings of effectiveness interact with her pre and early teaching experiences to develop ideas about her current practice and her students. These developing beliefs affect how she interacts with her students, what activities she might try, and how she address challenges in her classroom. Her mesosystem includes such school structures as joint collaboration time. Noted as a significant component in the development of confidence, this school structure augmented novice teachers' feelings of effectiveness in the classroom. A novice teacher's microsystem and mesosystem

interact and mutually affect each other in important ways that allow for a novice teacher's learning and growth.

Community context. Community context is an important part of a novice teacher's mesosystem because it affects student demographics, school wide policies, and ultimately her microsystem. In order to understand how a novice teacher's school and community context affect her beliefs about teaching and her feelings of effectiveness, it is important to include a qualitative description of each school and how the participants themselves defined their community context. The discussion below presents a case study for each school that includes information about the surrounding community, average income, and student demographics. Additionally, how the participants defined "community" within each school will also be offered.

Lincoln Elementary School. Lincoln Elementary has been classified as a moderately low SES school that supports an English only philosophy. Lincoln is situated in an urban commercial context that serves 762 students. Lincoln serves the students that live in the surrounding rental and low-income housing options within walking distance of the school. 89% of Lincoln's student body is Hispanic or Latino and 81.9% have been classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. The average monthly income for families that attend Lincoln is 62, 329 and the average household size is 3.7 (United States Census, 2010). 67.5% have been designated as English learners and speak a language other than English in the home. Lincoln boasts of a full time psychologist, a part time counselor, a reading coach, and collaboration time teachers. Additionally, Lincoln has been meeting its Adequate Yearly Progress goals and has not been designated as a school that is in need of program improvement.

Cathy, Vianney and Julie work at Lincoln as novice teachers. When asked about their school context they mentioned a number of things that stood out when compared to the other three schools and interview participants. They were more likely to mention negative student attributes in reference to their student body. They mentioned parent disengagement from student activities and progress and were unsure of a current PTA chapter. Moreover, they were more likely to make references about community involvement in terms of outside resources or donations. Examples of outside resources were the YMCA, Shop with A Cop, or a local family resource center (family resource centers can provide clothing, food, or housing to families in need). These resources played an active role in addressing the needs of their students.

Riverbank Elementary School. Riverbank Elementary was designated as a moderately low SES school that supported a dual immersion philosophy. Riverbank is situated within an urban commercial neighborhood that serves 668 students. Of these students, 88% are Hispanic or Latino and 81.1% have been classified as socioeconomically disadvantage. The students that attend Riverbank live in the low income and rental properties near the school. The average monthly income for families that attend Riverbank is 62, 329 and the average household size is 3.7 (United States Census, 2010). 67.7% have been designated as English learners and speak a language other than English in the home. Riverside shares a school psychologist with another school and has a reading and math coach. In terms of Adequate Yearly Progress, Riverbank has met its goals and is not in program improvement.

The novice teachers that worked at Riverbank were Marisol and Carmen. They held different opinions when making reference to their school's community context.

Marisol discussed her community in terms of poverty and the academic challenges that poverty created for her students, while Carmen discussed community context in terms of parental support and help with homework. However, both agreed on the level of parental engagement. They both made several comments about parental involvement and participation in their students' lives.

Kennedy Elementary School. In this study Kennedy has been designated as a moderately high SES school that supports a dual immersion philosophy. Kennedy is located in an urban residential community that serves 783 students. Of these students 45.8% are Latino, 28.9% are Filipino, and 13.4% are white. 17.1% have been classified as socio-economically disadvantaged and 25.5% are considered English Language Learners. Kennedy draws from the numerous single-family homes found in its surrounding neighborhood. The average monthly income for families that attend Kennedy is 95,461 and the average family size is 3.7 (United States Census, 2010). Kennedy has a part time school counselor and psychologist and offers GATE and specialized English Language instruction. Kennedy did not meet its Adequate Yearly Progress goals, however it is not a Title I school, and for this reason will not be designated as a school in need of program improvement.

Mariana, Rocio, and Alexis are the three novice teachers that worked at Kennedy. When comparing them to the other participants in regards to how they discussed their teaching context they stood out in terms of their positive comments. They mentioned parental engagement and interaction at their school, they made positive comments about the study habits and attitudes of their students, and they made several references to the

active PTA chapter at their school. In summary they felt very supported by the parents at their school and they felt the students were receptive to their teaching.

Explorer Elementary School. Explorer has been designated as a moderately high SES school that supports an English only philosophy. Explorer is located in an urban residential community that serves 784 students. Of these students 58.8% are Latino, 12.5% are Filipino, and 14.9% are white. 24.9.7% has been classified as socio-economically disadvantaged and 33.7% are considered English Language Learners. Explorer draws from the numerous single-family homes found in its surrounding neighborhood. The average monthly income for families that attend Explorer is 69,109 and the average family size is 3.4 (United States Census, 2010). Explorer employs a school psychologist and has met all of its Adequate Yearly Progress goals and is not in program improvement.

Eden and Jody were the two teachers that worked at Explorer Elementary. When comparing their comments to the other participants they mentioned parent involvement in terms of an active PTA and parent volunteers. Surprisingly, they did not make any comments about their students, positive or otherwise, when discussing their school context.

Although the schools were categorized in two groups based on SES, they each had additional characteristics that defined them. Among these are the ethnic demographics of each school and whether they embraced a dual immersion or English only philosophy. When asked about their school and community context, the interview participants made reference to a variety of school elements including parental engagement and disengagement, positive and negative student characteristics, and

community resources. None of the participants made reference to their school's resources, additional school personnel or their dual immersion or English only school philosophies. In light of the interview comments, the interview participants understand "community context" to be the community they serve, including the parents, the students, and outside constituents.

The contextual attributes of each school are important because they contribute to the mesosystem of each learning novice teacher. The specific student characteristics that contribute to each school affect different school structures and support a teacher's experiences within her mesosystem. A clear example of this connection is Lincoln Elementary School. Lincoln has been designated as a moderately low SES school and for this reason, has solicited the support of outside community resources to meet the needs of its students. These supports then affect a teacher's microsystem by allowing students to focus on academics instead of their basic needs. A discussion of novice teacher beliefs, feelings of effectiveness, and community context have all been presented. These different domains will now be used to answer the first research question.

Analysis of Research Question #1

The first research question asks about the nature of novice teacher beliefs, their beliefs about effectiveness, and how those beliefs might be related to their teaching context. To answer this question more directly, a summary of the previous sections is offered. A discussion about the relationship between school context and novice teacher beliefs concludes the analysis.

Novice teacher beliefs were discussed in terms of how the novice teacher

interprets their role in the classroom. Novice teachers principally believed their role to be about the social and academic growth of their students. Under this umbrella interpretation, two more detailed interpretations emerged from the interview data. The first maintains that teaching is about filling a social role in the classroom. These social roles include being a mother figure, a counselor, and a nurse, but it also includes being a good role model for students. The second maintains that the role of the teacher is to inspire and empower students to learn. This interpretation includes encouraging students to take ownership of their learning both for their personal improvement and to address the social inequalities they might be experiencing.

The second part of this question asks about the beliefs novice teachers have about their effectiveness in the classroom. Novice teachers' beliefs about effectiveness were put into terms of experiences that lead to feelings of effectiveness. The experience that led to the most feelings of effectiveness was professional development where the novice teacher learned new instructional strategies or were able to observe veteran teachers in practice. Second to professional development were the experiences of peer and colleague collaboration. Finally, the participants felt that previous successful experiences with children made them feel more effective with their students. These early experiences with children made them feel more effective later on when they had their own classrooms.

Novice teacher beliefs and school context. School and community context has been defined in terms of the demographics of each school. These demographics include high and moderately low SES, English language learners, evidence of parent involvement and communication, student performance on standardized tests, and dual immersion or English only philosophies. Because each school's demographics were related to their

moderately high or low socio economic status and to their dual immersion or English only philosophies, school context will be examined with teacher beliefs within these four categories. Table eight shows the school contexts and corresponding teacher beliefs. The numbers indicate the number of teachers that referenced that belief and an “X” indicates that no teachers referenced that belief within a specific context. The belief that teaching is about the academic and social growth of students was left out of the discussion because it was prevalent among all novice teachers. Additionally, the more detailed interpretations of the teacher’s role in the classroom were included to show the nuanced beliefs of each teaching context.

Table 9: *Community Context and Teacher Beliefs*

Prevalent Teacher Beliefs	Four School Context Categories			
	DI/Moderately high SES	DI/Moderately low SES	EO/Moderately high SES	EO/Moderately low SES
Good Role Model	2	2	X	X
Filling a Social Role	2	X	1	1
Empowering for Ownership of learning	1	X	1	2
Empowering for Social Justice	1	X	X	2

DI=Dual immersion EO=English only

When looking at the teacher beliefs outlined above in relation to the school context of each participant, telling patterns emerge. For example, the teachers that held the belief that teaching was about being a good role model for students worked within a context that supported the dual immersion philosophy. This was seen equally across

moderately high and low SES teaching contexts. This finding is substantiated because the dual immersion teachers were also Latina themselves and could identify with their student body in personal ways. This shared experience fostered the belief that they were role models for their students among this group of teachers.

The belief that teaching is about filling a variety of social roles for students did not seem to be prominent for any teaching context. Moreover, none of the teachers that worked within a moderately low SES context that supported a dual immersion philosophy mentioned the many social roles that a teacher fills throughout her day. This suggests that filling different social roles in the classroom is not dependent on a particular teaching context. The fact that teachers are asked to do many things, often not related to teaching, is a part of being a successful teacher. Perhaps filling different social roles in the classroom is such a dominant part of teaching that this belief did not stand out for the dual immersion teachers that worked in a moderately low SES context. It was already an assumption for their everyday practice.

Empowering students to learn for both student ownership of learning and to address social inequalities seemed to be more prevalent among teachers that worked in a moderately low SES context that supported an English only philosophy. This suggests that teachers that worked within this context recognized the inequalities their students were experiencing. This caused them to believe that their role in the classroom was to empower their student to take ownership of their learning in ways that would allow them to confront the social problems they witnessed among their students.

Discussion

The first research question offers a discussion of novice teacher beliefs, feelings of effectiveness, and community context. Additionally, it asks for an analysis of community context and teacher beliefs. Novice teacher beliefs stem from how they interpret their role in the classroom. This interpretation is associated with the demographics of the school and the ecocultural context within which a teacher works. The needs of a novice teacher's student body and how she decides to address those needs affect her subsequent beliefs about teaching and how she sees her role in the classroom. In regards to how novice teachers develop feelings of effectiveness, it was found that two principal activities found within a novice teacher's mesosystem develop feelings of effectiveness: professional development and teacher collaboration. Prior successful experiences with children are also important in the development of feelings of effectiveness. This finding is surprising considering the literature that discusses novice teachers and their experience in the classroom. Others have described the novice teacher experience as troubling, isolating, and "sink or swim" (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Corcoran, 1981; Veenman, 1984; Weiss, 1999). Within this description is the depiction that novice teachers generally feel ineffective. This was not the case for the participants in this study. Although there were times when they felt challenged by job or students, they generally felt effective as individuals, could identify the experiences that made them more effective in the classroom, and could indicate times when they were effective with their students. An analysis and discussion of the second research question will be presented in the following section.

Research Question #2: Pre and Early Teaching Experiences, Teacher Beliefs, and Feelings of Effectiveness

The second research question asks, “What are novice teachers’ pre and early teaching experiences? Specifically, how are these experiences related to their beliefs about teaching and their feelings of effectiveness in the classroom?” This research question includes the domains pre and early teaching experiences, teacher beliefs, and feelings of effectiveness. The domains for this question have already been discussed with the exception of pre and early teaching experiences. This section begins with a discussion of pre and early teaching experiences and concludes with an analysis of the research question itself.

Pre and early teaching experiences. There were two interview questions that elicited the greatest number of responses about pre teaching or early teaching experiences. They were, “Some people have lots of experiences interacting with children before they become a teacher. Some people have none. What about you? Was there one experience in particular that made you realize that teaching was what you wanted to do?” and “On your path to becoming a teacher, what kind of pre-service education did you go through? Were there other experiences that you had that kept you on the path to becoming a teacher?” The answers to these questions reveal that novice teachers define pre teaching experiences as any experience that contributed to them becoming a teacher. Additionally, they define early teaching experiences as any experiences they have had since they became a teacher. These experiences were organized under the following four headings: personal pre-teaching experiences, formal pre-teaching experiences, teacher education program experiences, and early teaching experiences.

Personal pre-teaching experiences. Personal pre-teaching experiences are experiences that the participant had during their own childhood or during their own K-12 education that led them in the direction of being a teacher. These experiences were shared by 90% of the participants and were seen across all participant demographics. Personal pre-teaching experiences usually made reference to a specific teacher or to an important family member. Mariana's comment shares a personal educational experience when she says,

I look back at my experience with my sixth grade teacher, and the admiration that I had for him. How I wanted to be so much like him and follow that path and just the idea of how disciplined and how courteous, and polite. Just on his personal level, how he managed himself and I wanted to be just in that format. Maybe that was one of the reasons why I, not even knowingly, knowing went into helping kids because I had that aspect. I admired him so much that for me the idea of being able to give that to a child.

Mariana is reflecting on how much she admired a teacher she had in her own educational career and how that teacher may have planted a seed for her wanting to be a teacher later on in life. The prevalence of this code suggest that many novice teachers have experiences in their own education that lead them to be teachers later on in life.

Similarly, the participants shared experiences they had within their own families that encouraged their interest in education and being a teacher. Vianney remembers her childhood experiences of playing with her cousins and always being the teacher. She says, "I just remember being really young, probably six or five or so and thinking, when I played with my cousins, I would play classroom and I would always be the teacher, so I thought, I want to be a teacher growing up." Playing teacher or school with her cousins fostered Vianney's interest in becoming a teacher later on in life. Marisol also has

childhood memories about her family that fostered her interest in becoming a teacher. She shares this experience by remembering a letter that her aunt shared with her when she graduated with her teaching credential. She says,

I even have a letter I wrote to one of my aunts when I was seven. I was in second grade and I had written, "I want to be a teacher." She sent that to me when I graduated in college...Oh, my God. I couldn't believe it and I wanted to treasure that moment....She kept it all those years and she said, "Oh, my God. You made it. That dream came true for you."

Marisol's aunt had the foresight to keep Marisol's letter and later show it to her when she achieved her dream. These kinds of personal family experiences play a critical role in a novice teacher's decision to become a teacher and also in their commitment to the profession. The early experiences of Vianney and Marisol began the development of an early teaching identity that would later lead them to the teaching profession. Pre-teaching memories are an important component in a novice teacher's ecocultural microsystem. These early childhood experiences shape her instruction and the interaction that a novice teacher has with her students and her teaching context. At the same time, her students and teaching context interact with her prior experiences to further her beliefs about teaching and instruction. It is this mutual interaction and sharing that allows a novice teacher to learn and grow.

Formal pre-teaching experiences. Formal pre-teaching experiences are formally organized or paid experiences that a participant had before pursuing a teaching credential. These experiences could have happened during high school or after. Examples include: babysitting, being a swimming coach, tutoring, nannying, high school volunteer, instructional aid, or being a substitute teacher. Of the ten participants, eight made references to their formal pre-teaching experiences. The two most prevalent codes were

volunteering and tutoring. The participants that had done volunteer work were predominately dual immersion teachers and teachers that had received their credential from a four-year state university with a fifth year credential program (four out of five). Additionally, three out of five participants that had done volunteer work, worked at schools with moderately high SES. Eden's comments are an example of a novice teacher's formal pre-teaching experience. She says,

So I started teaching when I was 15 and a half. Swimming lessons, I did that. I worked in a Rec Center. I worked with the Junior Lifeguard Program at the [local state beach]. So I did a lot with kids....I was a high school coach too...the high schoolers were all girls. The swim lessons, I taught mostly 3 to 5 year olds....I also coached grommets water pool, which was like fourth grade to eighth grade....And I coached primarily boys and then the Junior Lifeguard Program, I coached the C-level, which was 9 to 11 year olds.

Eden's comments are reflective of the participants that made reference to having formal pre-teaching experiences. They had many experiences and many different kinds of experiences within a formal context before pursuing their career as a teacher. As discussed earlier, these formal experiences were usually successful and positive and would later help to develop feelings of effectiveness in a novice teacher's microsystem.

Teacher Education Program Experiences. Teacher education program experiences are any experiences the novice teacher had while completing their course work to obtain their teaching credential. Among the interview participants there were three ways that they received their credential: an alternative certification program, a master's degree plus certification, or a four-year program plus a fifth year for certification. Six of the ten interview participants received their certification through a four-year plus fifth year for certification program. Because such a high number of

participants received their certification the same way, specific teacher demographics did not play a big role in how a teacher became certified.

All of the participants made at least one comment in reference to their teacher education program, their student teacher experience, and their course work. Of the 22 comments made about teacher education experiences, ten were made with the intention of describing their teacher education program to the interviewer. They referenced the components of their teacher preparation program, the choices they made, and the time it took them to get their credential. An example of this kind of explanation is Alexis's comments. She says,

It's a Dual Credential program where you get your Bilingual Credential and your Special Ed Credential from mild to moderate. In 2009, I graduated with my B-CLAD for multiple-subject in elementary setting. Then, in 2009, I got my mild to moderate credential in Special Ed, which was always a part of my Undergrad because you know how you have specialization. For Liberal Studies, I always specialize in Human Development, which is a lot of Special Ed courses so Special Ed was never a doubt in my mind to go into.

In addition to describing their teacher education programs, the participants made seven references to their student teaching experience. Much like the teacher education program comments, these references were mainly to describe their student teacher experiences or to discuss whether they felt their student teaching experiences were positive or negative. It is worth noting that all participants had two student teaching placements. This benefited them, as they were able to compare and contrast their teaching abilities with two separate master teachers and two separate student groups.

The remaining comments were directed to the value or effectiveness of their teacher education program. Only three out of ten teachers commented on how their

teacher education program and their student teaching experience helped them address the challenges they faced in their first year of teaching. The teachers that made these comments had completed a master's degree plus certification program and a four-year program plus a fifth year for certification. Vianney comments on how her teacher education program helped her become a better teacher when she says,

Yes, it was very much a learning experience for me because I did the lessons, and I was always so nervous being in the front of the classroom, but it built my confidence as a teacher. I had Mr. Russell and he would observe me and he would give me lots of good feedback, then I would continue to change. The age level was a really good age level that I worked with. My master teacher just gave me lots of good feedback as well with my lessons, with my management. It was an over all good experience.

Vianney goes on to say that her pre-teaching experiences helped her transition in the classroom and allowed her more confidence, as she developed her new teaching identity. When the remaining seven participants were asked directly about how their pre-teaching education experiences may have aided them, the teachers that made no reference to their pre-teaching education said that their teacher education lacked real world application.

Early teaching experiences. Early teaching experiences are experiences the novice teacher had during their first five years of teaching. Novice teachers defined these experiences broadly and 28 different experiences were coded for (for a complete list see appendix). Although novice teachers discussed their experiences broadly, there were some prevalent experiences that were seen across all participant demographics. These experiences include: colleague support and collaboration, piecemeal job assignments, support staff support, administrative support, and behavior problems—including severe.

Colleague support and collaboration. Colleague support and collaboration refers to the support a novice teacher felt or the collaboration they experienced working with their grade-level colleagues. All participants made reference to this experience during their first five years of teaching. When novice teachers talked about colleague collaboration they made reference to a protected collaboration time that their school offered each grade level. This time lasted from two to two and half hours. During this time they collaborated with their grade level by planning lessons, creating activities, and monitoring assessments. Julie discusses the collaboration at Lincoln Elementary when she says,

Yes, we do everything together...I mean our lessons are together, and we have our sets and screens, everything. We turn in one lesson for everyone, one month at a time. We have a whole...It's great in that way and I know that some teachers are like where is the individuality; but then I mean, that's when you collaborate and you talk about it. That's when the really good job comes in and that is when you have to agree with let's do that or if you don't have any ideas and you're going home with that idea that someone out there said. So collaborating with our team has really helped us.

Julie comments show that she enjoys collaboration with her colleagues. It is evident that she thinks collaboration is a valuable experience for building lessons and being a successful teacher. Collaboration is an early teaching experience that has made her feel more effective in the classroom

Piecemeal job assignments. Piecemeal job assignments refers to the patchwork of jobs that many novice teachers occupy before they land a full time teaching position. Examples of these kinds of jobs are: impact teacher, collaboration teacher, substitute, or instructional aid. All ten participants filled a variety of education-type jobs before becoming a full time teacher. Novice teachers typically take these jobs because they

encounter difficulty getting hired for a full time position straight out of college. Although piecemeal jobs were a disappointment to most novice teachers trying to obtain their own classroom, many participants looked back on these experiences as crucial in their teacher development. Vianney discussed this point when she says,

I learned how to make things fun. Give minimal directions, but efficient directions. Clear and concise. I learned a lot. I came from a different background. I was babied a lot. I came from a very sheltered background, so when I got into teaching I was still very meek. I was excited about it, I had the heart for it, but my demeanor was very meek, very, "Okay, yes sir." I had to put on the clothes and with putting on the teaching clothes, not the PE clothes, but putting on my first year professional clothes really just changed my mind, like I had to act... I look like I'm in high school, so I had to act like I wasn't in high school, because I'm not. A lot of that was practiced during those first three years as a support teacher.

Reflecting on past experience, Vianney felt grateful for the additional experience of having an education related job before she became a full time teacher. Many novice teachers feel ready to have their own classroom when they graduate with their credential, however looking back they realized that they benefited from the additional experience of a piecemeal job assignment.

Support staff support. Support staff support refers to the support a novice teacher feels from the support staff at her school site. Support staff includes: school counselors, psychologists, reading coaches, math coaches, or resource teachers. Eight out of ten participants referenced the support they received from their support staff. This came in many forms. For example, a reading coach might provide instructional strategies to a new teacher, a counselor might work on behavior modification strategies with a novice teacher, or a resource teacher might offer strategies to help with a reluctant learner. Julie shares her experiences with the support staff at her school when she says, "my school

psychologist was telling me at the end of the year, “you know, if there was a teacher that would have gotten an award that year, it would have been you,” because I was the class that had it all. She continues this sentiment by saying,

So it was really a tough year and I'm glad that it is over. It was definitely a learning process for me because I had to work with the SST team. I had to have so many modifications not only academic but also with behaviors so it was definitely like a learning process and on the team, I was talking to the school psychologist, talking to the counselors, talking to all the resource teachers to help with the behavior and with the academics so I was really trying to like “help me!” I don't know everything, help me, try to help me with what's going on. So it was definitely a growth/learning process.

Julie's comment reveals how much she depended on the support staff at her school. Her comment suggests that without them her year could have been a lot more challenging. Receiving support from the support staff is key as a teacher develops her teaching instruction and efficacy. The novice teachers in this study did not seem lacking in this area, and because of the support they received in the classroom, felt more effective as teachers.

Administrative support. Administrative support speaks to the support that many novice teachers felt from their administration. Examples of this kind of support are accessibility, positive classroom observation feedback, daily observations, an open warm relationship, and curriculum support. Eight out of ten participants mentioned administrative support as part of their early teaching experience. Alexis discusses this support when she says, “The administration is supportive. The door is always open even though they are busy and they always have things to do.” Rocio agrees with Alexis by saying,

My classroom management was horrible because I didn't have any experience and I had to observe other teachers. Dr. William would come in and she'd give me tips because I told her, "I don't know what to do." She's like, "I'm going to go observe you." She helped me out a lot. My team helped me out a lot and now, I got it. Now, I'm a lot better but I think that was one of my worst things was the classroom management.

Rocio and Alexis were not alone in their experience of administrative support. The novice teachers in this study felt like they could go to their administrators for help and resources. This made their first few years of teaching less mystifying because they could learn in a context where it was okay to get help and ask questions.

Behavior problems. Behavior problems are notoriously common for novice teachers (Ingersoll, 2007; Jacob, 2007; Olson & Osborne, 1991). The novice teachers in this study are no exception. Eight out of ten participants experienced behavior problems their first five years of teaching. Behavior problems ranged from incessant student disturbances to more severe violent behavior. An example of an incessant student disturbance is a talkative student that engages in non-violent conflicts with their classmates. Severe behavior issues are when students are violent to other students or the teacher. An example of a more severe behavior problem is when a child brings a butcher knife to school and makes threats towards his classmates. Two quotes that demonstrate these kinds of behavior problems come from Jody and Eden. Jody experienced more consistent, but mild behavior problems. She elaborates on her experiences when she says,

I think it was simply the combination of kids I had that year, that was the toughest. Um...a lot of drama between the kids. I had two cousins that were very dramatic and they had a lot of family issues going on at home, so they brought that into the classroom. I had a boy who, was being called into the psychologist a lot for his issues. Another boy that was just a behavior problem. So it was simply the combination of kids that made that year the hardest. It wasn't the academics, it was just dealing with those

kids, probably five kids all day, everyday that was draining and I wasn't enjoying that part of it.

Jody's behavior problems were consistent and in this way wore her down as she moved through her first year of teaching. Eden experienced more severe behavior problems. One year she had a class that was predominately boys. By itself, a boy heavy classroom is not a negative thing, however she felt like the behaviors they exhibited were overwhelming.

She says,

Yeah. I definitely think I felt discouraged. Actually, last year, I think I felt really discouraged. I think over all the years, I just had a really, really tough class...It was mostly all boys and it was just hard.

Heather: How many boys did you have?

Eden: Out of 24 I had like 16. And they were like just like a mob. It was like a mob. And I felt like it was me against them and they were just....It was just a lot. I had 24 and it was just a lot.

Eden is clear about feeling overwhelmed by the behavior issues in her class. However, the following year she continued to have severe behavior issues. In the following excerpt she provides the details for two of her student's behavior problems. She says,

He would throw and hit us. It was awful. We had to evacuate four times a week.

Heather: Evacuate?

Eden: Evacuate our classroom.

Heather: Why?

Eden: Because he would throw things at us. Like he would throw chairs. Like one of the scars on my knees is from him like right there....He like pushed me over. We had an aide too but he was just really, like when he gets like psychotic. He got diagnosed with schizophrenia....And then third quarter, I got another little boy from another class because they couldn't handle him, so he was in my class. And then a month ago, maybe three weeks ago, he brought a butcher knife to school to stab someone to get his toy back.

It is evident that Eden felt overwhelmed by the behaviors that are exhibited in her classroom. These behaviors are extreme and affect the learning and safety of her students.

Although startling, Jody and Eden's experiences are not uncommon among novice teachers and show a broad range of behavior issues that could occur in the classroom. Pre and early teaching experiences are a significant part of the contextual reality found in a novice teacher's microsystem and corresponding mesosystem. As a novice teacher brings her own previous beliefs and experiences to the classroom, they interact with factors in the microsystem such as student behavior and student demographics. Likewise, a novice teacher's beliefs interact with school structures such as teacher collaboration and support staff. Both of these contexts interact and affect a novice teacher's developing experiences and beliefs about teaching.

Analysis of Research Question #2

The second research question asks for an inventory of novice teacher's pre and early teaching experiences. It then asks for an exploration of how those experiences could be related to novice teacher beliefs or their feelings of effectiveness. A discussion about the relationship between novice teacher experiences and beliefs begins the analysis.

Pre and early teaching experiences and novice teacher's beliefs. A novice teacher develops her beliefs through a variety of sources. These sources include her previous personal K-12 experiences in the classroom, her teacher education experiences, and her current school placement experiences (Nespor, 1987; Richardson, 1996). This was found to be true for the novice teachers in this study. As they shared their pre and early teaching experiences, connections could be made between their personal pre-teaching experiences, their teacher education, their teaching context, and their current teacher beliefs. This was especially true for the dual immersion teachers. They could

pinpoint specific experiences in their own education which later encouraged a specific teacher belief. These beliefs were ultimately reinforced in their current teaching context. One clear example of these connections is Alexis's story. She was an English Language learner herself and experienced both dual immersion and English only classrooms in her own education. Her grandma and physically disabled aunt raised her. From Alexis's accounts, her Aunt played a large part in her own education and was someone that did not let her disability get in the way of her freedom or life goals. Alexis later chose teaching as her profession and became double certified in Special Education and Bilingual Education. When Alexis discussed her pre-service education, she mentioned that peer collaboration was a focus along with the idea that her students were capable of breaking their labels, for both special and bilingual education. She currently teaches in a school that supports a dual immersion philosophy, and although she primarily works with GATE students, she voices a belief system has been categorized as empowering students for both social justice and for student ownership of learning. She says,

I see another perspective of Special Ed where these children have the stigma that they're always going to be categorized as lows, flunked and end up in jail because of their disability. I kind of want to take that stigma and remove it and say, "Hey, you have this disability. Well, let's make it into something positive. Let's put you up. Let's have you achieve regardless of that disability."

In this comment Alexis is expressing a belief that has been formed with the gradual integration and accumulation of her previous experiences. This was the case for many of the participants in this study.

To examine novice teacher beliefs and previous experiences further, an examination was conducted between the specific beliefs that emerged in this study and

the pre and early teaching experiences discussed in the interviews. Two belief systems were included in the examination. They were the beliefs that teaching was about empowering students for ownership of learning and filling a social role. The belief that teaching is about the social and academic growth of students was left out because the majority of the participants voiced this belief. Moreover, it is important to note that the sample size for the interview data was small and many of the participants shared the same pre-teaching and early teaching experiences. This caused there to be little variation when looking at how their pre and early teaching experiences may have affected their teaching beliefs. Although the variation between the experiences that cause a teacher's beliefs is small, there are two trends worth noting.

Formal pre-teaching experiences and novice teacher beliefs. To determine whether there was a relationship between formal pre-teaching experiences and teacher beliefs formal pre-teaching experiences were put into leadership or non-leadership categories. Formal pre-teaching experiences were put into the leadership category when the novice teacher was in charge of students or a program during this experience. An example of a formal pre-teaching experience placed in the leadership category would have been substitute teacher or swim coach. This was done to see if formal pre-teaching experiences that require leadership skills might encourage a teacher to develop a particular teaching belief. Once this analysis was complete an important trend surfaced. Teachers that held the belief that teaching was about empowering students were twice as likely to have had formal pre-teaching experiences where they held a leadership role. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine if formal pre-teaching experiences that entail leadership do in fact support the belief that teaching is about empowering students,

however some speculations can be made. For example, when the belief that teaching is about empowering students is compared to the belief that teaching is about filling a variety of social roles, it becomes apparent that teaching for empowerment is a more intentional belief system that holds more weight in terms of student growth and progress. The belief that teaching is about filling different social roles is important but it doesn't entail teacher responsibility for student growth and improvement. Perhaps formal experiences that included being responsible for children early on, translated into feeling responsible for their students in ways that were more intentional than their novice teacher counterparts. For these novice teachers their formal pre-teaching experiences that required leadership aided the development of their specific beliefs about teaching. A novice teacher's pre-teaching experiences help create her initial teaching belief system that will later play an integral part in her microsystem. As is the case for these novice teachers, formal pre-teaching experiences that entail leadership roles lead to more intentional belief systems such as empowering students for social justice or for ownership of their learning.

Early teaching experiences and novice teacher beliefs. When an examination of early teaching experiences and novice teacher beliefs was conducted, no notable findings were found with the exception of behavior problems. Behavior problems are a consistent issue for novice teachers and eight out of ten participants mentioned behavior management as an early teaching experience that they struggled with. Behavior problems were categorized as normal and severe in the previous section. When looking at how behavior problems might affect a novice teacher's beliefs, it was found that teachers that held the belief that teaching was about empowering students had three times as many

severe behavior problems as their novice teacher counterparts. This finding makes sense when looking at the context within which most teachers that hold this belief work. The teachers that hold this belief predominately work in an English only, moderately low SES context. This context is also more likely to experience children that struggle in school and are less prepared for school success. With this lack of preparation comes behavior problems that can sometimes be quite severe or violent. It is possible that the novice teachers that work in this context witness these behavior issues and believe one way to address behavior problems is to empower their students to take ownership of their learning or to overcome the obstacles they see their students facing. Novice teacher beliefs and early teaching experiences mutually interact with each other within a novice teacher's microsystem. As they interact, the novice teacher learns more about her teaching practice and context. A discussion of how novice teacher's pre and early teaching experiences affect their feelings of effectiveness is presented next.

Novice teachers' pre and early teaching experiences and feelings of effectiveness. The NTS looked at pre-teaching experiences in terms of credential program type and credential school type. There were four credential program type options. The first three options were four-year degree plus fifth year for certification, alternative certification, and Masters plus certification. The last option was "other," providing the survey participant the option to provide another way they might have earned their teaching credential, although no one selected this option. For credential school type, there was a local 4-year university, local state school, private for-profit, and private non-profit.

To determine if there was a significant relationship between teacher education experiences and feelings of effectiveness, namely efficacy, an ANOVA was conducted to test for group differences. For the survey participants there were no significant group differences in efficacy ($F(3, 29) = 2.09, p > .05$) scores based on the type of university where the credential was received. There were no statistically significant group differences in efficacy ($F(2, 29) = 2.71, p = .08$) scores based on the type of credential program. A more in depth quantitative analysis of efficacy and pre-teaching experiences can be found in Chapter IV.

To determine how novice teachers' feelings of effectiveness might be related to pre and early teaching experiences, an examination of pre and early teaching experiences and feelings of effectiveness was conducted in relation to the interview transcripts. The results of this examination will be presented in two sections: Pre-Teaching Experiences and Feeling of Effectiveness and Early Teaching Experiences and Feelings of Effectiveness.

Pre-teaching experiences and feelings of effectiveness. The pre-teaching experiences that were the most salient for the interview participants were categorized as personal pre-teaching experiences, formal pre-teaching experiences, and teacher education experiences. All three of these experiences lead to feelings of effectiveness in the classroom. For many participants (9 out of 10) personal pre-teaching experiences included an influential relationship with one of their own K-12 teachers. The participants discussed their previous teachers in terms of what defines a "good teacher." Because the novice teachers viewed their previous teachers as "good" teachers, the assumption can be made that they also viewed their previous teachers and the strategies they used as

effective. Five of the interview participants claimed that they tried to incorporate some of the effective strategies that they had experienced as children into their own teaching and instruction.

Formal pre-teaching experiences also lead to feelings of effectiveness in the classroom. Among the experiences that lead to feelings of effectiveness in the classroom was *successful previous experience with children*. These previous experiences with children taught the participants about lesson timing, student interests, and age appropriate activities. This insight would later aid the novice teacher in the classroom and interacting with their own students. Not surprisingly, many formal pre-teaching experiences were the same experiences later coded as previous successful experiences with children. Seventy percent of the interview participants referenced their previous experiences with children as an experience that made them feel more effective while teaching.

Finally, teacher education programs also played a part in developing feelings of effectiveness in the classroom. This was the case for teachers that went through a Master's plus certification program and a four-year university plus fifth year for credential program. The teachers that received their credential through a Master's plus certification program maintained that their student teaching experience was very helpful in developing their skills as a teacher and that they used what they learned in their classroom. For instance, Jody says,

I feel like they gave me so many different skills and resources to use. Um...I think the resources more than anything. Yeah...I was able to know where to chose things from...um...the level of rigor. I thought that [local university] did a good job with that, for always extending opportunities for the kids. Making it exciting and relevant for their lives.

In this excerpt Jody is discussing what made her feel the most prepared for being a teacher. She references her credentialing program as an experience that she was able to draw from and that made her feel more effective in the classroom. The interview participants that went through the Master's plus certification program felt like they learned a lot in their preparation to become a teacher and were able to apply what they learned in affective ways.

Similarly, the teachers that went through a four-year plus fifth year for certification program also felt effective with their students. For these participants, they felt they were able to use the strategies they learned in their programs in their classroom later on. This was found to be true for teachers that were certified for regular education, special education and bilingual education. For example, the bilingual certified teachers felt they learned strategies that allowed them to reach their English language learners. Carmen speaks to this claim when she says, "...it was really nice to see the, like all the visuals and strategies that they had taught me work out for them." Carmen is expressing the sentiment that her credentialing program taught her the necessary strategies to address the needs of her students. Carmen developed feelings of effectiveness through her credential program that she could later use in the classroom.

Early teaching experiences and feelings of effectiveness. The early teaching experiences that lead to feelings of effectiveness were teacher collaboration, administration support, and support teacher support, teacher collaboration and support being the strongest among these. At each school novice teacher and veteran teachers alike had protected collaboration time that lasted up to two and a half hours. Of the ten participants, nine referenced collaborating with their colleagues as making them feel

more effective in the classroom. Julie touches on this sentiment when she says, “I think collaboration with our grade level has definitely improved our teaching and just sharing our ideas about what did or didn’t work.” In this comment Julie sees a direct correlation between collaboration with her grade team and her effectiveness in the classroom.

Marisol’s also talks about how collaboration has made her more effective in the classroom. She says, “This year, we have two-hour-and-a-half collaboration time a week so that's really good. Getting ideas from everybody, that's really good.” Marisol’s comment recognizes the benefit of collaborating with colleagues as a way to be more effective in the classroom.

Administrative support was another early teaching experience that allowed novice teachers to feel more effective in the classroom. This was true for teachers that had been working for two years or less or as teacher remembered their first two years of teaching. Administrative support was usually an administrator coming in and doing a class observation and giving feedback to a novice teacher. It might also be an administrator offering curriculum ideas, resources, or providing feedback on professional development. An example of an administrator coming in to observe was Cathy’s experience. She says,

I really felt like I could talk to my coaches and my principal. I never felt like he was going to reprimand me or, you know, ‘What are you doing?’, but more of, ‘Try this. This is a strategy you can use. I’ll come in and watch and see what I observe and see how I can help you’, so I felt like I had a lot of resources.

Cathy felt like the observations she received from her principal made her a better teacher. During these observations she received feedback about her instruction and how the class was responding to her teaching.

The last early teaching experience that leads to more feelings of effectiveness was support staff support. Support staff is the staff at a school site that supports the academic and social growth of students. Examples of support staff are school psychologists, counselors, and math and reading coaches. They made novice teachers feel more effective in the classroom by meeting with them during their collaboration time or on a regular basis to discuss the challenges that they were experiencing in the classroom. An example of such an experience was Vianney's encounter with her reading coach. She says,

I called on the reading coach a lot of times to come and observe me, give me pointers. Sometimes I give her specific things to look at. Sometimes I just say, can you just see my kids and see if they're responding to my teaching, so she gives me feedback. I'm very grateful that we have a reading coach.

Vianney is voicing the sentiment that she receives support from her reading coach, a support staff person at her site. Her reading coach observes her and gives her feedback and instructional ideas that she can later use to better her instruction. This was the case for the novice teachers that had one to two years experience and as more seasoned novice teachers reflected back on their first two years of teaching.

Discussion

Pre and early teaching experiences encompassed the many experiences that a novice teacher brings to the classroom. Pre-teaching experiences included teacher preparation program experiences, personal K-12 experiences, and more formal education-type experiences. It is not surprising that all of the participants discussed the particular details of their teacher preparation programs and that this played a substantial part in their

drive to become a teacher. The specifics and details of these programs provide insight into which teacher credential pathway supports the most feelings of effectiveness or fosters the most commitment to the teacher profession. The most surprising among these is the role that personal K-12 experiences played in encouraging the participants to become teachers later on in life. These stories demonstrate how impressionable young students can be and how these impressions can be long lasting and definitive in regards to choosing a profession. The early teaching experiences revealed many surprises about the experiences that most novice teachers are having their first five years of teaching. Among these are the support they felt from their administrators and the collaboration they experienced with their team. These findings are not supported in the research literature. The novice teacher literature portrays new teachers as isolated and receiving little support from their support staff or the administration (Ingersoll, 2002; Jacob, 2007; Olson & Osborne, 1991). The novice teachers in this study were not only encouraged to collaborate but were given protected collaboration time on a weekly basis that supported partnership with their colleagues. Moreover, their administrations and the support staff at their school site supported them. All of these early experiences make the novice teachers in this study an anomaly when compared to novice teachers studied by others.

In examining research question number two from an ecocultural perspective, an intermingling of two contexts can be seen. The microsystem, and its corresponding mesosystem, mesh in ways that are significant for the novice teacher. First, the pre-teaching experiences that a novice teacher brings to the profession are an important part of their microsystem. Second, a novice teacher's early teaching experiences, such as school supports and teacher collaboration, are embedded in her mesosystem. As these

two contexts intersect the novice teacher learns and grows. A clear example of this is the exceptional supports the novice teachers received and how those supports affected their teacher beliefs and feelings of effectiveness. Because they were well supported, their teacher beliefs were expanded upon and their feelings of effectiveness increased. In the following section, research question number three reveals important information about novice teacher's commitment to the profession and their exosystem and macrosystems.

Research Question #3: Commitment to the Profession, Teacher Beliefs, and Early Teaching Experiences

The third research question asks, "How do novice teachers talk about their commitment to the teaching profession? What kinds of beliefs and experiences are related to their commitment to the profession?" This research question includes the domains Commitment to the Profession, Teacher Beliefs, and Early Teaching Experiences. The domains for this question have already been discussed with the exception of Commitment to the Profession. This section begins with a discussion of how teachers talk about their commitment to the profession and concludes with an analysis of the research question itself.

Commitment to the teaching profession. When looking at all ten transcripts the most common way the participants discussed their commitment to the profession was in terms of their passion for teaching and how they liked teaching children. Eighty percent of the participants made comments such as, "I don't see myself doing anything else," or "I don't really feel like I'm going to a job. It's like a passion." Alexis, a first year teacher, reflects this sentiment further when she declares,

You just have to really love what you're doing because we deal with so much. If you're in it because you're passionate about it, then there's not going to be a doubt in your mind that you will ever want to leave --even if it's like financial 'cause you'll find a way. I have three jobs. It's like, "I have a part time job at the mall and I'm tutoring privately!" so you'll find it.

Alexis comment demonstrates the general perception that many of the participants expressed. They recognized that teaching was a challenge at times and to make it through these challenges, passion and love for the profession is needed. Moreover, the teachers talked about how much they enjoyed hearing their students say things like, "Oh! I get it!" and "Now, I understand!" The actual act of teaching children and seeing them progress in albeit small ways was gratifying and rewarding for the interview participants as a whole. These positive comments support the argument that the more passionate a novice teacher is about teaching, the more committed they would be to the teaching profession. When applying this argument to the four novice teacher demographics, dual immersion and English only teachers and low and moderately high SES schools, important trends emerge. Number of years teaching and credential pathways did not play a definitive role in this finding.

When looking at the Dual Immersion and English Only teacher groups, the Dual Immersion teachers made more comments about their passion for teaching than the English Only teachers. Out of the sixteen comments made, eleven of them came from Dual Immersion teachers. This evidence leads one to conclude that the Dual Immersion teachers seem more satisfied with their jobs and perhaps feel more passionate about their work, and in this way more committed. An additional study is needed to confirm or discredit this claim.

In regards to high and moderately low SES school groups, the participants working within a moderately low SES context made more references to their passion and enjoyment of teaching. Of the 16 comments made, teachers working in moderately low SES status schools made ten. This finding suggests that novice teachers working at moderately low SES schools are more passionate about teaching and thus more committed to the teaching profession. Previous literature that discusses moderately low SES schools (Jacob, 2007) states that they typically experience higher levels of teacher attrition and more teacher movement to better performing or more affluent schools. This was not the case for the participants in this study. They were passionate about their teaching and seemed even more passionate about affecting the lives of their students. Vianney captures this sentiment well when she says, “I feel like I'm good on top of all those things that I said, I still feel like I'm good at what I do. I enjoy learning more about what I do. There's so much room for growth. I love affecting kids, helping them out, helping them get to their “a-ha” moments.”

Another trend that surfaced in the participant interviews was a general feeling of being overwhelmed by the workload or feeling like teaching was too much work. Of the ten participants, seven mentioned feeling overwhelmed their first five years of teaching and especially their first year of teaching. In terms of participant demographics, no groups stood out as feeling more overwhelmed than their counterparts. This feeling played a part in their commitment to the teaching profession and whether they would stay or leave. Jody sums up this general sentiment among participants when she says,

It was so much work though, and so time consuming that I didn't know if I was going to be teaching for long term. Like I wanted to teach two years because I wanted to finish BITSA and I wanted to finish what I had

started. Um...and so I committed myself to two years, and then I thought I need to re-evaluate in two years. Because if this is the way it is going to be forever then maybe this isn't the ideal career for me.

Jody's words reveal the interest and desire to keep teaching that many of the participants shared. At the same time, she mentions the reality that teaching entails a lot of work, and this caused many novice teachers to consider their longevity in the teaching profession.

The last trend that was discussed in terms of commitment to the profession was job instability. Employment instability was not as prevalent across all ten participants, however it is worth noting. The code *job instability* was used to define the temporary status that five of the ten participants experienced their first years of teaching. Because the district is experiencing funding difficulties, they are no longer offering full time, tenured positions. Novice teachers are hired on as "temporary" employees and are only contracted to work for one year. They aren't guaranteed their position the next year and in this way the district can avoid the issue of pink slipping or laying off large numbers of teachers every year because of budget cuts. Once the teacher has been hired as temporary, each year they have to reapply for their same position or other positions in the district. The next step for a more permanent job is to become designated as "probationary." Novice teachers can be recommended by their principal or by the superintendent and then are moved to probationary status. There is a two-year probationary period and then the novice teacher becomes tenured.

Of the ten participants, five mentioned that they were designated as temporary employees and were in the process of reapplying for their current positions and similar ones in the district. Among these five participants three out of five were teaching at a

moderately low SES school, were English only teachers, and had been teaching for three to five years. For the teachers that have been temporary for three to five years, this experience is unnerving and demoralizing. They voiced the concern that that they were passionate about teaching, but could not continue to be designated as temporary employees of the district year after year. This designation created an obstacle as they planned their lives and continued to grow professionally.

Ecocultural theory posits that a learner grows and develops within social settings that mutually affect each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). Likewise, a learner's social settings can also inhibit their growth and development. Both of these scenarios appear to be in place in regards to novice teacher commitment. The positive pre and early teaching experiences allow the novice teachers in this study to hold onto to their passion for teaching and in some cases even expand upon it. These positive experiences allow the novice teacher to grow and develop in her teaching practice and beliefs. However, the stress from a heavy workload and the threat of job security constrict a novice teacher's growth and development and leave her with feelings of doubt about herself and her career choice. As discussed earlier a novice teacher's pre and early experiences are a meshing of her micro and mesosystems interacting together. The workload a novice teacher is responsible for can also be seen as part of this integrated relationship. A novice teacher's experiences with job insecurity are not a part of the day-to-day contexts that she interacts with, however their impact is large. A novice teacher' job security is part of a policy that is supported and propagated by the school district and can be found within her exosystem. As stated by the participants in this study, it did not affect them on a day to day basis but as the end of the year became closer and their employment status became

more pressing, it was an additional stress that caused them to doubt their professional commitment.

Analysis of Research Question #3

The third research question asks for an inventory of how teachers discuss their commitment to the profession. It then asks for an examination of how teacher beliefs and early teaching experiences are related to novice teacher commitment. To answer this question, a summary of the previous section is presented first, followed by a discussion about the relationship between novice teacher beliefs, experiences, and commitment to profession.

When asked about their commitment to the teaching profession, the most salient code across all ten interviews was *liking/being passionate about what she does*. Eighty percent of the participants made reference to how they enjoyed teaching and were passionate about their jobs. An additionally important code was *being overwhelmed by workload* or that teaching was too much work. Seventy percent of the participants made reference to the workload as a reason they might leave the profession. This code was expected given the research on novice teachers. The last pattern worth noting is *job instability*. Five teachers made reference to *job instability* in relation to their commitment to the profession and four of the interview participants were designated as temporary.

Commitment to the Teaching Profession and Teacher Beliefs. To determine the relationship between novice teacher beliefs and commitment to the profession, the two more personal prominent teacher beliefs were separated out into their respective components. The belief that teaching is about the academic and social growth of students

was left out because it was a prevalent belief among all participants and did not allow for comparisons among different levels of commitment.

When looking at the belief that teaching is about filling a variety of social roles, it is likely to fall short for making a teacher feel more committed to the profession. The fact that teaching is about filling a variety of social roles is a descriptive attribute more than a belief system that would affect a teacher's behavior or sense of responsibility towards her students. The teachers that made reference to this belief system discussed it in terms of the roles they filled. An example for this kind of reference is Rocio's comments. She says,

There's so much to do. You play music all day. You tie shoelaces. You're not just teaching. You're a doctor. You're a psychologist. You're a counselor and there are so many roles that you do in the classroom.

In this comment Rocio is sharing all the different roles that she fills as a kindergarten teacher, however she is not discussing them in light of her commitment to the profession or in relation to her responsibilities for the academic growth of her students.

Contrary to its counterpart, the belief that teaching is about being a good role model would foster commitment to the teaching profession. The dual immersion teachers that hold this belief are committed to the profession because they initiated the steps needed to work with a Spanish speaking population and continued to choose this population to serve in their teaching. Moreover, the dual immersion teachers saw themselves reflected in their students. Mariana's comments are a concrete example of this connection. She says,

I know how that feels to be learning a language and just sitting there and watching your teacher talking and not getting anything. I know how that

feels so I pretty much use the strategies that had helped me learn the language with them...visuals and physical movements and all that.

In this quote Mariana is expressing a common experience that she has with her students. This shared experience allowed novice teachers to relate to their students culturally and linguistically. The dual immersion teachers felt strongly about addressing the needs of students that were experiencing some of the same challenges they experienced as students or later on in life.

The additional belief that teaching is about empowering students to take ownership of their learning is also a belief that would foster commitment among teachers. Teachers that held this belief were more committed to teaching because they had a driven purpose in working with their students and were looking for evidence of that purpose in their teaching and in the student's reactions to their instruction. Mariana, a teacher that expressed this belief, reflects this sentiment when she says,

Just the idea that I'm going to make this child improve, that I've dedicated some time after school to help them, because we have poor readers, or kids who are in fourth grade and who are reading at kindergarten level. I thought, something has to be done. Why hasn't something been done for this child? So, just that kept me in the profession.

Mariana is voicing the purpose she feels towards teaching and why she is committed to the profession. Moreover, many of the novice teachers talked about that ah-ha moment that they enjoyed seeing in their students. These teachers maintained a purpose in regards to their teaching and instruction and felt satisfied when they saw their students meet the objective they set for them.

The belief that teaching is about empowering students for the purpose of addressing social inequalities is like the belief that teaching is about being a good role

model. The teachers that held this belief also wanted to work with a particular population because they had specific intentions in working with them. These teachers identified the social inequalities they saw their students experience and they viewed their students' education as a solution to these problems. One such sentiment is Cathy's comments. She says,

[Teaching] It's an opportunity to fight for the kids that aren't necessarily fought for. And a chance to show them that they're completely capable of success. It's instilling a sense of pride and ownership and ability and confidence in them that they're not getting from other places, like worth.

Cathy is expressing the belief that teaching is about "fighting" or advocating for students who don't usually get advocated for. She wants to help her students recognize their self worth through their education. Because she has a strong sense of purpose in her teaching, her teacher beliefs will ultimately make her feel more committed to the teaching profession. The discussion will now turn to how commitment is related to early teaching experiences.

Commitment to the profession and early teaching experiences. In part, this component of research question three has already been answered. As the interview participants discussed their commitment to the profession they shared the teaching experiences that are related to their commitment. The experiences previously mentioned are job instability and having to manage a heavy workload. Job instability played a heavy part in a novice teacher's decision to stay in the profession. If a teacher has been designated as temporary for more than three years, she may wonder when and if she will ever be probationary so that she can later be tenured. This was the case for the four participants that were designated as temporary. They wondered how long they could

continue putting energy into a job that had no job security and also make personal growth decisions in their own lives. Additionally, managing a heavy workload was also an experience related to job commitment. Seventy percent of interview participants mentioned this in relation to their commitment to the teaching profession. The participants were not prepared for the amount of work that was needed for them to be successful teachers.

Although already mentioned, these experiences alone are not the complete picture. Novice teachers also mentioned student behavior and student growth in relation to their commitment to the profession. Student Behavior was a dominant code for early teaching experiences. Eighty percent of the participants experienced moderate to severe behavior problems with their students. Because student behavior was a prevalent experience across participants and because for some it was quite extreme, it did factor into their commitment to the profession. An example of this sentiment is Eden's comment. She says,

I heard somebody say once, "My gosh, the kids nowadays and their behavior!" I can't imagine in forty years what it will be like, feral children just coming in. "You have parents, is anybody teaching you anything at home?" There are some years where I think, "Does anybody talk to you at home?" So I'm thinking in forty years, "Oh man, I got to get to plan B or I don't know if I can do it."

Eden did experience more than one severe behavior problem during her first five years of teaching. In this quotation she is expressing her fears and doubts that student behavior will get worse and that she will not be able to handle these new behavior challenges in the future.

The participants also mentioned *student growth and progress* as an experience

that contributed to their commitment to the teaching profession. The participants made numerous comments about the accomplishment and enjoyment they felt when they saw their students succeed or learn something new. Carmen reveals this feeling when she says,

Just seeing the growth like from day one. They were in the classroom everyday and just seeing how much they could learn, what the potential of the little kids are...that's just very rewarding.

Carmen feels that the growth she sees among her students encourages her to continue in the field of teaching. Cathy agrees with Carmen when she says, "There are sometimes when just, "Ahhh!!", and they challenge you. But I've seen them grow this year and so then those days you're like how can I not do this?" Cathy is voicing her frustration with the student challenges she experiences in the classroom. However, those challenges seem to out weigh the successes that she also experiences with her students.

Discussion

The interview participant data indicate that novice teachers talk about their commitment to the profession in three primary ways: liking or being passionate about their jobs, feeling overwhelmed about the workload that teaching brings, and job instability. In regards to novice teacher's commitment to the profession and novice teacher's beliefs, there seemed to be a connection with the exception of the belief that teaching is about filling many social roles. The beliefs that supported teachers working with a specific population and with a specific purpose appeared to foster more commitment among novice teachers. This finding is supported in the literature. Teachers that chose to work within a certain community, or can identify with the community they

serve, are more committed than those that chose teaching because they enjoy children (Howes, James, & Ritchie, 2003; Human-Vogel & Dippenaar, 2013). When looking at how early teaching experiences affect novice teacher's commitment, it was found that job instability and heavy workload as well as student growth and behavior factored into their decision to leave or stay in the profession. Asking novice teachers about their commitment to the profession and discussing the aspects of their job that encourage them to leave or stay is important because it provides insight into a novice teacher's ecocultural context. Novice teacher's commitment to the profession touched on all three systems: micro, meso, and exosystems. It is what a novice teacher brings with her to the classroom in terms of beliefs and ideologies that mutually influence her microsystem and concurrent mesosystem. A novice teacher's exosystem plays a significant part in her commitment to the profession as district policy and employment structures affect her job security. By looking at novice teachers from an ecocultural perspective, a deeper understanding of her commitment to the teaching profession and her decision to leave or stay is gained.

Summary

In Chapter V an analysis of the interview data is presented by using a mixed methods approach. The findings were presented within the principal domains that were relevant to each research question. These domains include teacher beliefs, feelings of effectiveness, community context, early teaching experiences, and commitment to the teaching profession. Under each domain the more salient codes were discussed in light of the participant demographics. Additionally, each domain was studied through an

ecocultural lens to gain a better understanding of its nature and how it might relate to other domains. During this domain examination many surprises surfaced in relation to novice teacher experiences and commitment. Among these are the early teaching experiences of peer collaboration, administrative support, and support staff support. These experiences were not previously found in the novice teacher literature. Others have painted a dismal picture of the novice teacher as isolated and neglected by their administration (Corcoran, 1981; Herbert & Worthy, 2001). This was not the case for the participants in this study. An additional surprise was how novice teachers discussed their commitment to the profession. Some of the typical factors such as heavy workload and student behavior were mentioned, however the most salient code was their passion for teaching. This sentiment has largely been left out of the literature. Perhaps the school supports mentioned earlier have allowed these novice teachers to maintain their passion for teaching and in some ways have neutralized the overwhelming nature of their more negative teaching experiences. The qualitative findings presented in Chapter V reveal many important aspects about the novice teacher experience. More importantly, the findings affirmed that novice teachers learn and grow within social and forever changing contexts. These contexts affect her development as she affects her context and her context affects her in telling ways.

Chapter VI: Emergent and Unexpected Findings

This study set out to better understand novice teachers and their beliefs, experiences, and commitment to the profession. Although the findings for each data source have been presented and the research questions have been answered, a complete integration of these findings is needed to gain a better understanding of novice teachers and their first five years of teaching. When reflecting on the interview and survey data in its entirety, two additional findings emerge. The first is grounded in the idea that the teaching context mediates a novice teacher's beliefs, feelings of effectiveness, and commitment to the profession. The second hypothesizes that novice teachers will stay past the five-year mark if given the appropriate structural supports and job security.

Teacher Context as Mediator

The first finding posits that a novice teacher's context mediates or serves as a filter that shapes her beliefs, feelings of effectiveness, and commitment to the profession. As can be seen in Figure 2, novice teachers enter the teaching profession with a set of factors or attributes. These factors include their early teaching beliefs, pre-teaching experiences, and number of years teaching. Number of years teaching could be a 1-2 years or 3-5 years of experience. Her early teaching beliefs are developed from her own personal and K-12 learning experiences. Her pre-teaching experiences range from personal to more formal experiences such as her teacher education program. Lastly, the number of years she has taught at her current school and whether she has taught at other schools is something else she brings with her to the school context.

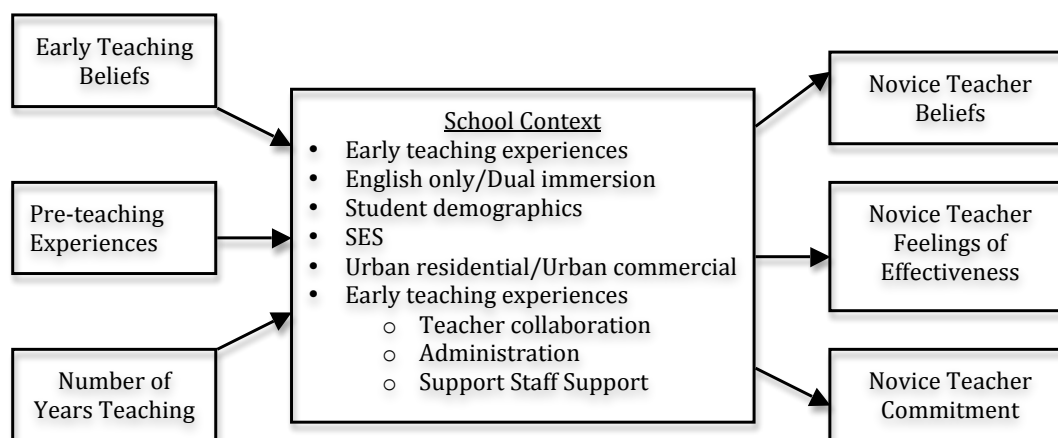


Figure 2: *School Context as Mediator*

As a novice teacher brings these different factors to her school setting, they interact with the context and are expanded upon or changed. For example, a novice teacher's school context, namely student demographics and SES, further shape her beliefs. This was clearly seen with the participants that believed school was about empowering students for social justice or about being a good role model.

A novice teacher's early personal and formal experiences also interact with her context to form her feelings of effectiveness. She draws on these experiences as she interacts with her students, plans her instruction, and addresses challenges in her classroom. For the participants in this study, their previous experiences with children were a source of efficacy that was ultimately built upon because of the positive contextual structures in place at each school. They were afforded collaboration time with their colleagues, had administrative support, and were supported by their support staff. Their initial pre-teaching experiences meshed with these contextual structures to afford them more feelings of effectiveness in the classroom.

School context mediates novice teacher commitment by incorporating all three novice teacher factors. First, a novice teacher's strong early teaching beliefs can include a purpose and a desire to serve a specific student body. If this is the case, working within a specific context and community affirms a novice teacher's beliefs about teaching. This was true for the dual immersion teachers. They felt passionate and committed to the communities they served and could not imagine serving a different population. Second, pre-teaching experiences, mediated by teacher context, also affect novice teacher commitment. A teacher with strong early teaching beliefs is usually inclined to develop a particular focus in their teacher education program and desire a specific teaching assignment related to their original teaching beliefs. Being placed at a school that affirms these initial beliefs and experiences would lead to more commitment among novice teachers. An example of the relationship between early teaching beliefs, teacher education, school placement, and subsequent teacher commitment is Marisol's story. She was an immigrant herself, developed her own early beliefs about teaching, became certified in bilingual education, and was later placed at a dual immersion school that served a population that she strongly identified with. Marisol's school context affirmed her initial beliefs and experiences that fostered her commitment to the profession. Finally, number of years teaching mediated through school context affects teacher commitment. If a teacher had been labeled as temporary for three years or more, it begins to affect their commitment to the profession. This was true for the participants in this study. Teachers that had been labeled as temporary for three years or more expressed less commitment to the profession than teachers that had been labeled as temporary for one to two years.

Considering the findings in there entirely allows for an analysis of important relationships between key domains. The importance of context was indicated in all five domains suggesting its importance and dependent nature. It is the definitive factor in a novice teacher's beliefs, their feelings of effectiveness, and their commitment to the teaching profession.

Teacher Experiences, Job Security, and Increased Commitment

The second finding suggests that with the right contextual experiences and secure employment status, novice teachers will remain in the profession well pass their first five years of teaching. The interview participants voiced challenges that many novice teachers experience, namely behavior problems and work overload. However, these challenges appeared less extreme because of the supportive structures in place at each school. The protected collaboration time, the support they felt from their administration and support staff allowed the novice teachers to address these challenges without comprising their commitment to the profession. Job security is also part of this equation. If a novice teacher has been hired under temporary status and remains temporary for two years, their commitment appears to be unaffected. However, once a novice teacher has reached three years of experiences and has not made it past temporary status, their commitment wanes even with strong school structural supports (see Figure 3). Teachers that continue to be designated as temporary past the three year mark begin to question if they can stay in teaching and still make personal growth decisions. Moreover, they found the process of

having to reapply for their position every year demoralizing and disheartening.

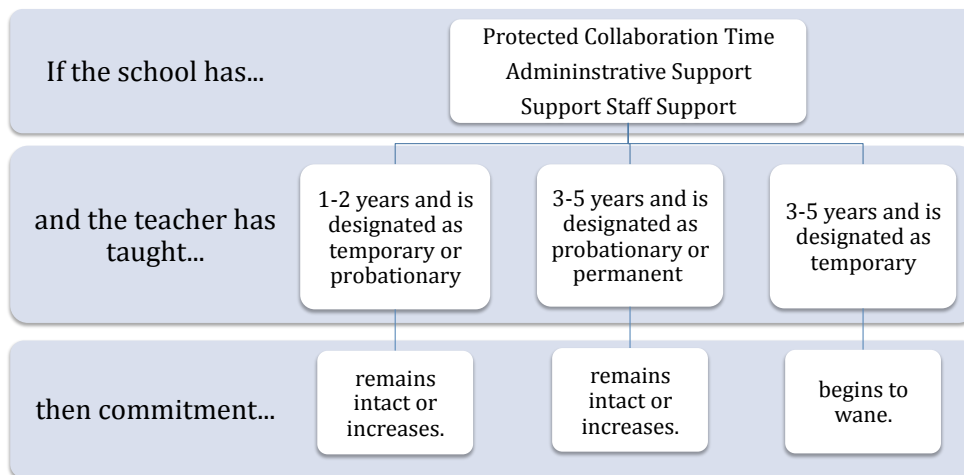


Figure 3: *Teacher experience, job security, and commitment to the profession*

For the participants in this study, novice teacher commitment appears to be more about job security than school wide job conditions or feelings of effectiveness (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). The absence of school conditions as an issue among the participants reflects the exosystem, namely the school district, within which the novice teachers in this study are working. The novice teachers in this study are hired under a yearly contract every year and in this way Harmony Elementary School District doesn't have to pink slip a large number of teachers. Because job insecurity is so prevalent among novice teachers their first concerns are reasonable and have more to do with securing a permanent teaching position. For this group of teachers, working conditions are important but did not come out as a prominent issue. Additionally, the working conditions of the novice teachers involved were remarkably positive and for this reason were not brought up in a negative light.

Feeling ineffective with students did not appear to be relevant for the novice teachers in this study. They did express occasional doubt in regards to their practice, however as previously stated in Chapter V, the novice teachers expressed feelings of effectiveness in a variety of ways. They felt effective as individuals, as they modeled their past teachers, and through their early teaching experiences. For the participants in this study, teaching was a challenge but they felt like they were constantly improving and did not feel discouraged in their growth as a teacher.

Discussion

Using ecocultural theory to better understand the data collected, this study found that context is of principal importance for the novice teacher. The classroom and school context, or a novice teacher's microsystem, seems to mediate the key components that determine her beliefs, her feelings of effectiveness, and her commitment to the teaching profession. The research data in this study also indicates that novice teachers are passionate about teaching and will remain committed to the teaching profession if certain school structures are in place and if they have achieved permanent or probationary status. Although employment status is a substantial issue, it is encouraging that it is not directly related to a novice teacher's context or instruction. Once a novice teacher overcomes temporary status, it is quite possible that she will remain in teaching and be content in her profession.

Chapter VII: Discussion

I feel like I'm good on top of all those things that I said, I still feel like I'm good at what I do. I enjoy learning more about what I do. There's so much room for growth. I love affecting kids, helping them out, helping them get to their “a-ha” moments. —Vianney

Chapter VII is organized into three sections. The first section begins with a summary of the major findings for this study within the context of existing research. The second section examines how the current study fits into the novice teacher literature. Finally, the third section concludes the chapter by discussing ecocultural theory and how it can be used to better understand novice teacher beliefs, experiences, and commitment.

Summary of Major Findings

This study sought to explore novice teachers' beliefs and experiences their first five years of teaching by using an ecocultural lens and a mixed methods approach. More specifically, the current study was designed to understand novice teacher commitment by looking at novice teacher beliefs, feelings of effectiveness, and school context. In light of this study's goals, many important findings emerged from both the qualitative and quantitative data. For example, it was found that novice teacher beliefs have more to do with how a novice interprets her role in the classroom than a belief system that is regularly drawn from while teaching. This interpretation includes the umbrella belief that teaching is about the academic and social growth of students. Under this umbrella belief are two more personal and detailed interpretations of a teacher's role. The first is grounded in the idea that teaching is about the social roles a teacher fills. Examples of these kinds of roles are being a good role model, psychologist, nurse, or friend. The

second comes from a more empowering perspective. These teachers believe that teaching is about empowering students for ownership of learning or empowering them to address the social inequalities they experience. In addition, novice teacher beliefs are affected by the teaching context such that the students a novice teacher serves shape her beliefs. This was found to be especially true for dual immersion teachers and teachers that work within a moderately low SES. These findings are supported in the literature that addresses teacher beliefs. Teacher beliefs are based on affective and evaluative loading and what is called episodic storage (Nespor, 1987). For teachers these episodes start when they themselves start school and during the initial years of their profession. These episodes or experiences have feelings and moods attached to them and are directly related to the teaching context, including their students and school (Richard, 1996). This was found to be true for the interview participants in this study.

With regard to feelings of effectiveness, all of the participants mentioned professional development, including observations, as experiences that led to feeling effective in the classroom. Collaboration with peers and previous successful experiences with children also played a substantial role in the development of feelings of effectiveness. These finding are further supported in the literature when looking at feelings of effectiveness in terms of the development of efficacy. Bandura (1997) claims that mastery and vicarious experiences along with verbal persuasion are strong sources in the formation of self-efficacy. Previous successful experiences with students would qualify as mastery experiences that later caused the novice teachers in this study to feel effective. Additionally, professional development and observations could have been a form of vicarious experience that was also able to foster feelings of effectiveness. Finally,

verbal persuasion most likely happened during the protected collaboration time that novice teachers were given to work with their colleagues.

Surveying the field of pre and early teaching experiences showed the wide range of experiences a novice teacher can have that would affect her decision to choose teaching and to stay in the profession. The most prevalent pre-teaching experiences were personal and formal pre-teaching experiences, and teacher education experiences. The prevalence of teacher education experiences is not surprising considering the requirements for entrance into the profession. However, the pervasiveness of personal and formal experiences that later translated into the decision to become a teacher was surprising and not previously discussed in the literature. For early teaching experiences there were additional surprises. The majority of interview participants indicated collaboration and peer support, administration support, and support staff support as prevalent among their experiences. These exceptionally positive experiences have been largely left out of previous research. A novice teacher's first five years have been depicted as problematic (Veenman, 1984), insecure and disheartening (Olson & Osborne, 1991), paralyzing (Corcoran, 1981), and isolating (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). The novice teachers in this study did not share experiences that support this depiction. Among the more typical experiences that were shared amongst interview participants were student behavior problems—both severe and moderate and feeling overwhelmed by their workload.

Finally, both surprising and expected findings surfaced when asking novice teachers to discuss their commitment to the profession. The most consistent way that novice teachers talked about their commitment to the profession is in term of their

passion for teaching. They mentioned their love of teaching, enjoyment derived from seeing their students make progress, and their passion for the profession. This finding is not supported by the literature. Novice teachers have typically discussed their commitment in terms of monetary compensation, status and prestige, school-wide conditions, and feeling effective with students (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). This finding could be explained by reflecting on the early teaching experiences that many of the participants shared. Their early teaching experiences are unusual in that they were given consistent collaboration time and felt the support of both their administration and support staff. Perhaps this supportive environment neutralized the negative experiences that many novice teachers have their first few years of teacher and ultimately allowed them to keep their passion for teaching intact.

Outside of passion for the profession, novice teachers also mentioned that teaching was “too much work” and in this way expressed that they were overwhelmed by their workload. This finding is consistent with the literature that discusses novice teachers (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). They also mentioned job instability as a major factor as they thought about staying in the profession. This was especially true for teachers that had been teaching for three to five years. The teachers in the three to five year bracket that had been designated as temporary employees for three years or more and had to re-apply for their positions every year with no guarantee of getting an additional contract. They found this experience demoralizing and discouraging and a cause to consider leaving the profession. The following section includes a discussion of findings not readily answered by the research questions.

Placing This Study Within the Current Research

The literature addressing novice teachers in relation to their experiences, attrition rate, and feelings of effectiveness is expansive. The novice teacher experience has overwhelmingly been described as negative. Novice teachers typically experience isolation, feelings of insecurity, and a period of “transition shock” (Corcoran, 1981; Olson & Osborne, 1991). Moreover, Herbert and Worthy (2001) maintain that novice teachers experience a loss of idealism as they try to incorporate their previous knowledge of teaching into their current classroom. Novice teachers are also struggling to become socialized into their new teaching context and have a strong desire to gain affiliation with the staff at their current school (Olson & Osborne, 1991). Finally, the negative experiences that most novice teachers encounter are exasperated by inadequate peer collaboration and limited administrative support (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

When discussing the attrition rate of novice teachers, the literature maintains that novice teachers leave because of job dissatisfaction or pursuit of a better career (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Job dissatisfaction includes low teaching salaries, and school working conditions. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) found school conditions to be student discipline problems, lack of administrative support, poor student motivation, and lack of teacher decision-making. In addition to these reasons, Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that novice teachers most often leave the profession because they feel ineffective with their students.

Novice teachers’ feelings of effectiveness have been studied with the use of quantitative methods, namely participant surveys, and through the construct of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy maintains that feelings of effectiveness are developed through

mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal (Bandura, 1997). Researchers have studied self-efficacy among novice teachers and their teaching context to determine the factors that encourage strong self-efficacy among novice teachers, and more specifically which school supports are necessary for self-efficacy development (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Hoy & Spero, 2005).

The previous literature regarding the novice teacher experience, their commitment to the profession, and their feelings of effectiveness, has proven to be accurate in many instances and is well documented. However, when the literature is compared to the current study, many discrepancies are noted. Among the most evident of these discrepancies is the novice teacher experience itself. As stated earlier, novice teachers are typically insulated among their peers, insecure, and experience a loss of idealism. This was not the case for the participants in this study. They did voice challenges and experience many of the standard obstacles that novice teachers face, namely student behavior and a large workload. However, these challenges did not seem to carry the same weight or indicate a strong dissatisfaction with the teaching profession. There are two possible reasons for this inconsistency. First, all ten participants experienced school structures that were remarkable in their support and guidance. The most notable among these school structures was the protected collaboration time. This was a time when the novice teacher was able to get help from colleagues, address common challenges, and plan for the week's upcoming lessons. When the participants mentioned their collaboration time, they also mentioned receiving encouragement from their school coaches and emotional support from their colleagues. In addition to the support they received during collaboration, many of the participants felt supported by their

administration through consistent observations, curriculum resources, or direct collaboration. This kind of positive interaction between administration and teachers fostered a mentorship atmosphere and was encouraging to teachers new to the field. Finally, the schools that participated in the study employed part or full time support staff that were readily available to assist with academic and behavioral challenges in the classroom. Novice teachers met with support staff to create specific behavior plans, get lesson ideas, or review assessment data. For the novice teachers in this study, the support staff at each site served as an additional support and guide as they addressed common classroom challenges. These three significant supports demonstrate that the novice teachers in this study did not work in isolation or experience long terms of insecurity. They experienced some of the same challenges that every novice teacher face, however these challenges were neutralized by the support structures at each school.

An additional explanation for this discrepancy could have been the participation of dual immersion teachers. Half of the interview participants were dual immersion teachers and they stood out as a group that seemed particularly satisfied with their profession. Not only were they receiving the support that their English only counterparts were receiving, they could identify in significant ways with their student body. The dual immersion teachers came from the same country, had experienced the same socioeconomic status, and spoke the same language as their students. This shared experience afforded the dual immersion teachers an additional purpose and drive in their teaching. When the dual immersion teachers achieved their teaching endeavors and accomplishments, they felt a great sense of satisfaction. Like their English only

counterparts, these positive experiences seemed to overcome the challenges they may have faced as novice teachers.

A further discrepancy between the literature and the current study can be found in the way that the novice teachers talked about their commitment to the profession. Two sizeable differences are apparent, followed by some more subtle distinctions. For instance, the teachers in this study did not mention job dissatisfaction, salary compensation, feeling ineffective, or school conditions in relation to their commitment. The most salient comment among interview participants was their passion for the profession or liking their teaching job. This finding is perhaps predicated on the other unusual experiences these particular novice teachers had, namely colleague collaboration and administrative and support staff support. Their unwavering passion for teaching seems to suggest that the contextual school supports that these teachers experienced allowed them to maintain their passion for teaching throughout their novice years. The passion that was expressed by the interview participants would indicate stability in their commitment well past the five-year mark. This finding is promising and indicates hope for the novice teacher attrition.

A second divergence in the discussion of teacher commitment was the mention of job security as a factor in long-term commitment. This discrepancy might explain why the interview participants did not emphasize school conditions as a reason to leave the profession. The teachers that mentioned job security fell within the three to five year teaching bracket. These teachers had been teaching for at least three years and were not guaranteed a job the following year. This reality concerned them year after year as they planned their lives and made decisions about marriage and children. Moreover, it

exasperated their need to perform and prove themselves to their administration during weekly observations. If a novice teacher is distracted by her employment status or whether she will have a job next year, she will be less concerned with a school's particular working conditions, or the fact that teaching entails many challenges, and more concerned with whether she will be employed the following year. In light of not having a job, these concerns are a luxury that half of the participants were not able to experience. These two findings support the previous argument that novice teachers will remain passionate about teaching and will stay committed to the profession until they reach their third year. If they reach their third year and have not gained probationary or tenured status, their commitment to the profession diminishes despite strong contextual supports.

There were also more subtle differences between the novice teacher literature and the current study. These discrepancies emerged in the way efficacy beliefs are measured both in the literature and in the current research study. Feelings of effectiveness are typically studied using quantitative methods and through the self-efficacy construct (Hoy and Spero, 2005; Glickman and Tamashiro, 1982; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). To gain a deeper understanding of novice teacher efficacy beliefs and their feelings of effectiveness, this study used a mixed methods approach, utilizing both a self-efficacy survey and semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix B for a complete version of the survey and list of interview questions). This difference is notable because novice teachers were asked directly about their feelings and experiences of effectiveness. Their responses reveal that feeling effective is multi-layered and draws from a variety of personal attributes and experiences. For example, the participants seemed to possess the necessary personal characteristics that allowed them to be effective not only in teaching

but in other parts of their lives. Moreover, they drew extensively from their past K-12 experiences to develop their ideas about effectiveness. Lastly, their views about effectiveness in the classroom came more from their experiences and less from their beliefs. These experiences included professional development, peer collaboration, and previous experiences with children. It is probable that the multi-layered nature of efficacy, and more specifically feelings of effectiveness, would not have been as clear using quantitative methods alone. This difference in methods afforded the current study a more nuanced version of novice teacher's feeling and beliefs that will hopefully inform the body of research that addresses novice teacher commitment.

An additional difference was found in the efficacy survey results. Unlike previous studies using self-efficacy measures that found significant relationships between efficacy and other constructs, the current study found none. Participant efficacy was not significantly related to any of the participant demographics including credential school, credential type, number of years teaching, and corresponding commitment scores. Furthermore, the strong presence of efficacy evident in the interviews was not reflected in the participant efficacy scores. In fact the participants with the lowest efficacy scores seemed to be the most efficacious interview participants. These discrepancies are explained by first considering the nature of novice teachers as a distinct group with specific characteristics and second by taking into consideration the unusual experiences of these particular novice teachers. First, it is important to study novice teachers as a separate group with specific characteristics and experiences. It is possible that novice teachers judge themselves too harshly as they compare themselves to their more experienced counterparts. Perhaps they feel satisfied with their progress, but when asked

the questions included in the efficacy scale, they also recognized the deficits in their teaching ability. Second, the novice teachers in this study had unusual experiences in their first years of teaching. They encountered supports and scaffolding that most novice teachers don't receive. Perhaps these experiences neutralized the efficacy scores in ways that don't portray novice teacher efficacy beliefs accurately.

In sum, this study seems to challenge the research literature in regards to the novice teacher experience and their commitment. These novice teachers are content and passionate about their jobs. This passion remains intact if they are given strong school structural supports such as colleague collaboration time, administrative support, and support staff support. Because of these aids, they remain committed and appear to be willing to stay past the five-year mark if they are able to achieve permanent or probationary status. Their feelings of effectiveness appear to be multi-faceted and are drawn from personal attributes and prior experiences. To further the discussion of novice teacher commitment, experiences, and beliefs, a discussion of ecocultural theory and how it relates to these domains is presented in the following section.

Ecocultural Theory and the Novice Teacher

This study has employed eco-cultural theory to better understand the novice teacher's settings and how they might interact with each other to impact novice teacher beliefs, experiences and commitment. Bronfenbrenner (1976) presents ecocultural theory as a "nested arrangement of structures" or settings that are posed as successive levels (see Figure 4). These settings include the microsystem, the mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner posited that the learner grows within concentric circles or

social settings that mutually impact each other. A novice teacher's interaction with her classroom setting is dependent on what she brings to the classroom in terms of beliefs, values, and experiences. Concurrently, the attributes of her classroom and students interact with her instruction forming new experiences and beliefs. These new perceptions allow her to grow as a teacher and ultimately affect her instruction. In this section each ecocultural setting is examined in light of the findings presented in the preceding chapters.

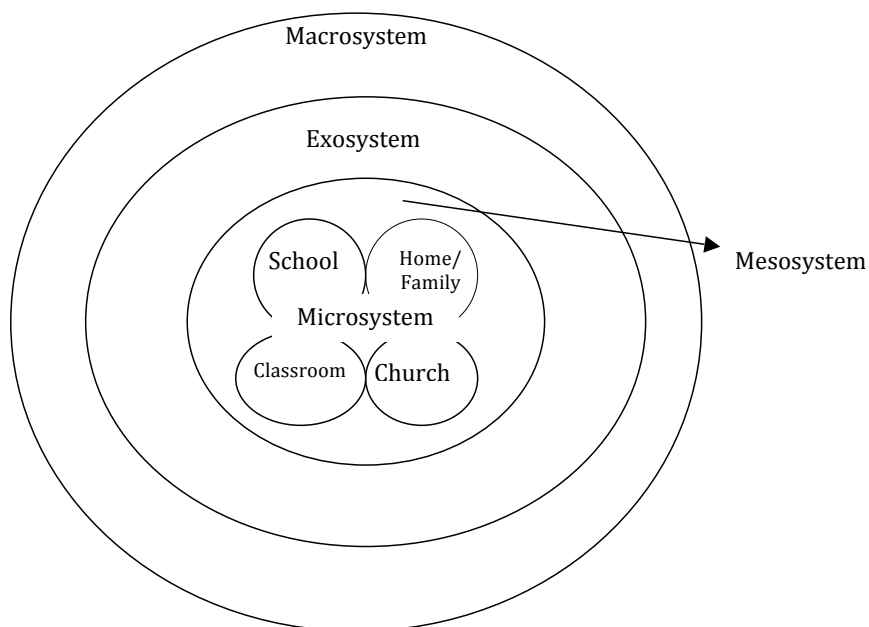


Figure 4: *Bronfenbrenner's Ecocultural Framework*

The microsystem. The microsystem is a cluster of immediate settings that contain the learner. These settings can change throughout the day and as the novice teacher moves from one setting to the next. For this study, the classroom was the most important setting within the microsystem. The classroom setting contains a variety of elements that interact with each other to affect the novice teacher as learner. For instance,

the classroom contains the students and their corresponding demographics including SES, English language knowledge, cultural identity, class size, and developmental age. It also contains more peripheral elements such as instructional curriculum, availability of resources, and parent volunteers or instructional aides. The novice teacher herself is an additional element with her microsystem. She brings a variety of variables including her previous beliefs, experiences, number of years teaching, and her feelings of effectiveness. These prior experiences include her personal, K-12, and teacher preparation experiences. As the different elements of each key player interact with each other, the novice teacher learns and grows.

The microsystem played a substantial role in this study for multiple reasons. The role was evident in the development of teacher beliefs, feelings of effectiveness, and how novice teachers discussed their context and commitment to the profession. The novice teachers in this study came to the profession with beliefs that were previously formed through their pre-teaching experiences, both personal and formal, and their teacher education. This can be seen in the core belief that many of the teachers mentioned in their interviews. They believed that teaching was primarily about the academic and social growth of children. Once they interacted with their students and corresponding context, this primary belief grew to include more personal and detailed beliefs. This was especially true for the teachers that worked within a dual immersion setting. They believed that teaching was about being a good role model for their Spanish speaking students. Additionally, the teachers that worked within a moderately low SES and English only context believed that teaching was about student empowerment. As the

novice teachers interacted with their classroom context, their teaching beliefs grew to reflect the student body they were serving.

Likewise, feelings of effectiveness were also developed through an interaction between the novice teacher and her classroom setting. The novice teacher interacts with her setting using a set of assumptions about her effectiveness based on her previous experiences. As she interacts with her setting, these assumptions are either confirmed or challenged and new assumptions about effectiveness are created. An example of this interaction is the level of effectiveness the novice teachers came with upon entering the profession and the additional experiences they had in the classroom. They felt effective as people, had previous successful experiences with children, and had ideas about effective teachers before they started teaching. Once teaching, their ideas about effectiveness expanded as they continued to have such experiences as professional development and colleague collaboration. As their previous feelings of effectiveness meshed with their new contextual experiences, the novice teachers formed new ideas about their effectiveness in the classroom.

The microsystem also played a part as the novice teachers developed commitment to the teaching profession. The novice teachers talked about their commitment in terms of passion for teaching, workload, behavior problems and job instability. A teacher's passion for teaching, her workload, and the behavior problems she experiences are directly related to the microsystem of her classroom. A teacher's passion for teaching is created as her beliefs interact with her experiences and the specific students at her site. She may feel more passionate as her beliefs are affirmed or her students achieve the learning objectives she has set for them. The behavior problems that she experiences in

her classroom are influenced by how she interacts with her students and the personal challenges they may bring with them to the classroom. Moreover, the needs of her students, the curriculum that is available to her, and her skill at using her instruction tools all work to create her workload. These elements together integrate to form her commitment towards the teaching profession.

The mesosystem. The mesosystem consists of the interactions between the settings found within the microsystem. Bronfenbrenner (1976) states that the mesosystem is “a system of microsystems.” (p. 6). In this study the interaction between the classroom setting and the school setting were of principal importance. The contextual structures for each school were exceptional in that they provided support to their novice teachers. The novice teachers were able to collaborate with their peers and receive support and encouragement from their administration and corresponding support staff. These positive structural attributes interacted with a novice teacher’s classroom primarily through her instruction and subsequent growth and progress. These supports allowed her to feel more effective with her students and put her instruction into perspective in terms of her failures and successes. Moreover, both the school and classroom settings interacted with the novice teacher’s experiences, beliefs, and attitudes. This interaction created further integration of ideas and ultimately growth that would later affect a novice teacher’s instruction through new ideas and beliefs about teaching and her effectiveness. As the school context and classroom interacted with each other, the novice teacher’s microsystem supported her in her growth and progress.

The exosystem. The exosystem is an extension of the mesosystem and embraces both the formal and informal settings that make up a novice teacher’s mesosystem. The

exosystem may contain elements that affect the novice teacher, in ways that both inhibit or foster her growth as a learner. However, she does not typically interact with the exosystem on a consistent basis. The school district is one such component in a novice teacher's exosystem. Novice teachers did not interact with their school district on a regular basis, however the district's policies affected them in telling ways. The Harmony Elementary School District had implemented a policy that only contracted temporary employees at a specific site for one year at a time. When a novice teacher's contract ends, she has to reapply to the same school and position every year until she becomes designated as probationary. This experience was especially disheartening for novice teachers that had been teaching for three years or more. They began to question whether they would ever reach probationary status and later become tenured. Additionally, many novice teachers maintained other part-time employment for fear they might lose their job and not be able to secure an additional teaching position. A novice teacher's energy towards another profession and her insecurities about employment status ultimately took time away from her teaching practice and hindered her growth and progress.

Macrosystems. Macrosystems can be thought of as the umbrella of institutions that make up the concrete manifestations found within the microsystem. Macrosystems serve as carriers of ideology and information that support the political, social, and economical norms in society. For example, it is the macrosystem that determines what is consistent among all elementary schools. What is taught may be different, however as one enters a school campus it will be arranged under certain social norms that are expected. These social norms could include a certain number ratio between teachers and students, that the classroom is set up with desks for each student, or that schools typically

have a hierarchy that includes a principal and a vice principal. Because many of the components found within a macrosystem are presented as standard or normal, they often go unnoticed by the principal learner. This was also the case for the novice teachers in this study. The fact that they had to answer to a principal and they were expected to serve twenty-two students and their individual needs went unquestioned and was not mentioned during the participant interviews. Although unmentioned, it can be speculated that many of the norms considered standard affect a novice teacher and how she learns and grows. For example, the student teacher ratio affects the intensity of her workload and in turn how much time she spends on the teaching task. If a novice teacher had ten or fifteen students to serve, she might be afforded more time for reflection and further growth. While largely unnoticed, the macrosystem plays the largest role in a novice teacher's growth and progress because it dictates and shapes the concrete settings found within her microsystem.

Summary

Chapter VII presented a summary of the principal findings within the context of relevant literature. When comparing the current study with the literature that details the novice teacher experience, their beliefs, and commitment, many discrepancies are apparent. Among these is the negative portrayal of the novice teacher experience, how novice teachers discuss their commitment, and the methodology used to study novice teachers and their efficacy beliefs. Finally, this study affirmed the interactions that occur between the various settings found within a novice teacher's ecocultural system. As a novice teacher interacts with her classroom, school, and students, she integrates new

experiences into her beliefs, feelings and attitudes and in this way she grows as an educator. The following section discusses this study's implications for practice, limitations, and final thoughts.

Chapter VIII: Implications and Conclusions

A goal of this study was to better understand novice teacher commitment by first reviewing their beliefs, experiences, and feelings of effectiveness. Towards this end, qualitative methods were employed to gain a more nuanced perspective of novice teacher attrition. By asking novice teachers directly about the nature of their commitment, many important findings were revealed that could be applied to current novice teacher practice. Chapter VIII begins with a discussion of the study's findings in terms of recommendations to the field of education, schools, the district, and teacher education programs. The study's research limitations and some final thoughts about the study in its entirety conclude the chapter.

What is needed to address the attrition rate of novice teachers

The field of education. The field of education is an important player in how novice teachers are perceived in the classroom and how novice teachers perceive their new profession. There are a number of things the field of education could do to improve the novice teacher entrance into the profession. First, the field of education needs to accept teachers as being novice for the first five years of their profession. The research community defines novice teachers as teachers that have been working for five years or less (Ingersol & Smith, 2003). However, the field of education, schools, and districts alike do not view novice teachers as novice by any means. In fact, teachers entering the profession are expected to carry a workload equal to their veteran counterparts. If novice teachers, and their corresponding schools and districts, defined new teachers as novice

the first five-year of teaching, a culture of mentorship could be created and novice teachers could be viewed as apprentices trying to master a new skill.

Second, the field of education could do more to educate novice teachers to the realities they will face once they have their own classroom. All of the novice teachers in this study were surprised by the number of novice teachers that drop out of the profession before their fifth year. They seemed to think that they were they were the only ones experiencing challenges in the classroom. Being more transparent about the challenges that most novice teachers face, would aid in creating a set of realistic expectations for novice teachers during their first five years of teaching. This set of expectations would help in creating a culture where it's okay to struggle and ask others for help. Accurate expectations would also allow novice teachers to better judge if teaching is the profession for them before they spend time and energy pursuing a teaching career.

Teacher education programs. Teacher education programs are nested within the field of education and have a more concrete role in changing the novice teacher experience. One idea for making the transition from being a teacher education student to being a full time teacher in the classroom would be to create mentorship program. The graduating university could support this mentor program with the intention of being an extension of the teacher education program itself. The mentor could be a veteran teacher or professor contracted through the university that would observe and provide feedback to the novice teacher in their new teaching environment on a weekly basis. This mentorship would serve to provide support and guidance to the novice teacher in a safe and encouraging relationship.

An additional recommendation for teacher education programs would be to arrange for the student teaching experience to match their first teaching placement as much as possible. Moreover, all teacher education programs should require for a year's worth of student teaching. The research literature indicates that novice teachers are more likely to be placed at schools with lower economic status and within an urban setting (Jacob, 2007). If that is true than student teaching placements should be exclusively within schools that fit this description. An extended time frame in a challenging context with the support of a veteran teacher would capitalize on gaining as many real experiences in the classroom as possible prior to a novice teacher's first placement.

Schools. The immediate school context serves as the backdrop for a novice teacher's experiences and beliefs. This key role demonstrates the importance of having critical supports in place at every school. Three structural supports were indicated as indispensable to the study participants: protected collaboration time, administrative support, and support staff support.

Protected collaboration time. The novice teachers in this study were exceptional in that they did not experience the typical feelings of insecurity and isolation that many novice teachers feel their first five years of teaching. This is directly related to the protected collaboration time that novice teachers had at their school site. During this collaboration time many of the challenges that novice teachers regularly face in isolation, were dealt with within a group of peers. This provided the novice teachers a safe place to discuss student concerns, get help with lesson planning, and receive encouragement from teachers that were having some of the same experiences. Additionally, collaboration time encouraged feelings of effectiveness and ultimately fostered a deeper commitment to the

teaching profession. For these reasons, this study's primary recommendation is to incorporate protected collaboration time into the weekly schedule of veteran and novice teachers alike.

Administrative support. As articulated by the novice teachers, many received the consistent support of their administration. This support was in the form of weekly observations, direct collaboration, or curriculum resources. Knowing that the administration was there to help and support them in their growth and progress was a relief for many of the teachers in this study. The school administration seemed to take a more involved approach and was often seen in teacher classrooms and providing time for teacher reflection. The positive interactions that novice teachers had with their administration led to more feelings of effectiveness and in turn more commitment to the profession. This finding supports the recommendation that administration should dedicate some time to supporting novice teachers through classroom observations, curriculum support, or simply positive interaction. This kind of interaction will foster the kind of teacher-administrator relationship needed to keep novice teachers in the profession.

Support staff support. The teachers that experienced the most classroom challenges referenced the support they received from the support personnel at their school. These personnel were instrumental in developing behavior contracts, writing up modified learning objectives, and coaching teachers in instruction delivery. In some cases this support was almost an extension of student teaching as math and reading coaches observed lessons and gave feedback on specific strategies. As stated by the participants themselves, many felt that without the support staff at their school they would not have

been as skillful in addressing the behavior and learning challenges they encountered in the classroom. This finding suggests having support staff would have a substantial impact on novice teachers and their commitment to the profession.

School districts. The school district emerged as playing a significant role in the macrosystem of novice teachers. The school district was not a setting that the novice teachers interacted with on a regular basis, however district policy negatively affected novice teacher commitment. A final recommendation is to examine how the district moves novice teachers through the hiring process.

District policy. This study found that novice teachers remain committed to the profession for the long term with the right school support structures and permanent or probationary status. All novice teachers are hired under temporary status during their first year of teaching. If there is a corresponding permanent position available, and their principal or the superintendent recommends them, they will move to probationary I their second year of teaching. From probationary I, they can then be moved to probationary II their third year of teaching. If they make it through these first three years of teaching, the next year they are tenured. Because novice commitment appears to wane after three years of temporary status, a review of the process is needed. One idea is to automatically make novice teachers probationary I after being temporary at the same school for three years in a row. If a novice teacher has been designated as temporary for three years and is still being asked back, they have technically met the three-year requirement of temporary and later probationary I and II. This allows the novice teacher to have some sense of security, in addition to the convenience of not having to reapply and interview for the same

position year after year. It also benefits the school district because the novice teacher is still probationary and could be let go if needed in the future.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study contributes to the research literature that is dedicated to exploring novice attrition and commitment to the profession. More specifically, this study employed a mixed-methods approach to explore novice teacher beliefs, experiences, and commitment to the profession. While the study offered many important insights about novice teachers, the applicability of this study is limited to both context and time. One recommendation for future study is a longitudinal study employing the same research questions. One such study would allow for a more detailed analysis of how novice teacher commitment, beliefs, and feelings of effectiveness change over the course of their first five years of teaching.

Additionally, future studies examining novice teacher commitment should include larger numbers of participants to strengthen quantitative and qualitative findings. This study was also limited to the school district where the surveys and interviews were completed. Future studies comparing novice teachers from different schools, cities, states, or regions within the United States may offer insights into how to continue to foster novice teacher commitment within varying school settings.

Novice teachers working within a dual immersion context also stood out as an area for future research. This novice teacher population seemed to have especially strong teacher beliefs and feelings of effectiveness. Likewise, their cultural and linguistic identities seemed to play a substantial role in their commitment to the teaching

profession. A study that looks at this population by employing the same research questions would offer insight into the dual immersion experience that could later be applied to other novice teachers serving the same demographic. An additional study that compared dual immersion teachers that did share and did not share the cultural identity of their students would also be fruitful in further examinations of novice teacher commitment.

This study offers a number of recommendations. Each of these recommendations offers direction for further research. First, studying the nature of novice teacher collaboration and the different kinds of interactions that occur during collaboration time would provide more detailed insight into how this experience fosters commitment and feelings of effectiveness. This study speculates about the interaction that takes place and how it plays into the four sources that develop teaching efficacy. However, a study that explores mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal in light of novice teacher collaboration time would be fruitful in important ways. With this information collaboration time could be even more impactful if it included structures that were specifically geared to fostering the four efficacy sources mentioned by Bandura (1977).

Administrative support was a factor that was mentioned by the novice teachers in terms of their development of effectiveness. Although many of the novice teachers mentioned interaction with their administration, the specific kinds of interaction varied substantially. The interaction ranged from direct collaboration and classroom observations to verbal positive encouragement. A study that explores the different kinds of teacher-administration interaction that foster feelings of effectiveness would give

principals a more detailed guide for how to interact with the novice teachers at their site.

Support staff support was also a structural component that varied in its intensity and form. Lincoln Elementary boasted of the most support with counselors, child psychologists and both reading and math coaches. However, every school had at least a part time psychologist or school counselor. A study that examines how each one of these supports played out in relation to novice teacher effectiveness or commitment would provide insight into the need for additional supports and the ones that were less needed.

It is important to note that this study's intention was not to seek the importance of the teaching context as mediator. Rather, a broader net was cast in terms of the novice teacher experience and the teaching context emerged as a definitive player in a novice teacher's experiences, beliefs, and commitment. A final recommendation for future research would be to include the context when looking at different components of the novice teacher experience. Examining each attribute or component in isolation does not provide a complete picture of novice teacher growth or development. How a novice teacher interacts with her immediate school setting is key to better understanding his or her experience during the first five years of teaching.

This study has revealed important insight about novice teacher's experiences, beliefs, and commitment. Although fruitful in its efforts, this study's findings indicate that there are additional areas of research that would provide an even more detailed understanding of novice teacher and their commitment to the profession.

Research Limitations

While this study explored novice teacher experiences, beliefs, and commitment to the profession, it is important to discuss its limitations. In particular, limitations related to the study's sample size, participant demographics, participant self-reporting, and school and interview participation are noted.

Sample size. This study's sample size could be viewed as a research limitation. This study was done in a southern Californian school district with four elementary schools with specific demographics. Additionally, thirty participants filled out the novice teacher survey and ten agreed to be interviewed. Because the sample size was small, the generalizability of the findings to other teaching contexts may be limited. While findings from this study may not be applicable to novice teachers working within a higher socioeconomic context with different student demographics, the study's findings may be applicable to other novice teachers that share the same teaching contexts as the study's participants.

Participant demographics. The interview participants shared many of the same demographic characteristics. For example, six out of ten had graduated from a four year state university and had received their credential through a fifth year of study. Because of this limitation, conclusions could be made about teachers that had graduated from a four-year university and had received their credential through an additional fifth year of study, however the comparisons that could be made between teacher education programs and different certification paths was limited. A larger sample size with more variation in teacher education would have allowed for stronger conclusions in terms of which pathways or institutions fostered more commitment or feelings of effectiveness among interview participants.

Participant self-reporting. A further limitation for this study is that the interview participants recounted their own stories and perceptions about their personal experience. A limitation in self-reported data is that it might not be as accurate as multiple sources describing the same data point. It is possible that participants remembered events differently than they actually happened or that they elaborated on events or occurrences to portray themselves favorably. Although this may be true for any self-reported story, the fact that many of the participants mentioned the same experiences in reference to similar questions affords the personal recounting of information more validity.

The schools and novice teachers that chose to participate. Finally, the schools and teachers that chose to participate in this study are not a realistic representation of all novice teachers or schools within the chosen school district. Because participation was voluntary, only schools and teachers that were open to an examination of their practices participated. It can be assumed that if a school and corresponding teacher is open to discussing their school and teacher practice, they probably feel confident and successful in what they are doing. Those schools that don't feel confident in their practices are less likely to participate. Perhaps this limitation is an additional reason that accounts for the overwhelming positive accounts that most novice teacher's experienced in this study. It is possible that their schools had already taken steps to support the teachers at their school and in this way were also supporting their novice teachers. Despite the aforementioned limitations, the findings from this study contribute to the body of knowledge that discussed novice teacher experiences, beliefs, feelings of effectiveness, and commitment to the profession.

Final Thoughts

This study sought to offer insight and clear understanding regarding novice teacher beliefs, experiences, and commitment to the profession. In particular, this study sought to contribute to the body of research focused on novice teacher attrition and professional retention. Grounded in the voices and perspectives of novice teachers themselves, much was gained in terms of clarity of novice teacher experiences and beliefs. More specifically, this study suggests that the teaching context is of utmost importance. The teaching context mediates a teacher's early teaching experiences, her beliefs, feelings of effectiveness, and commitment to the profession. Whether or not the teaching context is supportive determines her positive growth and progress in these areas. Additionally, novice teachers do feel effective in the classroom and with the right contextual factors in place, can hold on to the passion and affection that first brought them to the profession. Moreover, novice teachers want to remain in the profession and are willing go above and beyond to prove their willingness to stay. It falls on the district, administrators, colleagues, and support staff to support them in their efforts to improve themselves and honor that willingness stay in the profession.

Appendix A

Novice Teacher Survey

Thank you for taking the time to fill this survey out.

Introduction to this Survey

A number of statements about organizations, people, and teaching are presented below. The purpose is to gather information regarding the actual attitudes of educators concerning these statements. There are no correct or incorrect answers. I am interested only in your frank opinions. Your responses will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone.

General Information

1. What is your first name?
2. What is the name of the school where you currently work?
3. Where did you receive your teaching credential?
4. How did you become a certified teacher?
 - a. Alternative certification program
 - b. Master's plus certification degree
 - c. Four year college degree
 - d. other
5. Teacher's Gender
6. How many years have you been teaching in a full time teaching position?
7. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview?

Attitudes Towards Teaching

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate your personal opinion about each statement by clicking on the appropriate response at the right of each statement KEY: 6 = strongly agree, 5 = moderately agree, 4 = agree slightly more than disagree, 3 = disagree slightly more than agree, 2 = moderately disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

8. The amount a student can learn is primarily related to family background.
9. If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline.
10. When I really try, I can get through to most difficult students.
11. A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement.
12. If parents would do more for their children, I could do more.
13. If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.
14. If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.

15. If one of my students couldn't do a class assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.
16. If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.
17. When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.

Attitudes Towards School Site

The following comments are statements that teachers have made while describing their schools. Think about the following statements and how accurately they describe your experience as a teacher at your school site. There are no correct or incorrect answers. I am interested only in your frank opinions. Your responses will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone.

KEY: 6 = strongly agree, 5 = moderately agree, 4 = agree slightly more than disagree, 3 = disagree slightly more than agree, 2 = moderately disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

18. I like the way things are run at this school.
19. The teachers at this school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group.
20. If I could get a higher paying job, I'd leave teaching as soon as possible.
21. The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it.
22. I think about transferring to another school.
23. I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching.
24. I think about staying home from school because I'm just too tired to go.
25. If you could go back to your college days and start over again, would you become a teacher or not?
 - a. Certainly would become a teacher
 - b. Probably would become a teacher
 - c. Chances are about even for and against
 - d. Probably would not become a teacher
 - e. Certainly would not become a teacher
26. How long do you plan to remain in teaching?
 - a. As long as I am able
 - b. Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from this job.
 - c. Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from a previous job.
 - d. Until I am eligible for Social Security benefits.
 - e. Until a specific life event occurs (e.g., marriage or parenthood)
 - f. Definitely plan to leave as soon as I can
 - g. Undecided at this time

Appendix B

Novice Teacher Interview Questions

1. There are many different reasons that people go into teaching. Tell me about your decision to become a teacher.
2. What does being a teacher mean to you?
3. Some people have lots of experiences interacting with children before they become a teacher. Some people have none. What about you? Was there one experience in particular that made you realize that teaching was what you wanted to do?
4. On your path to becoming a teacher, what kind of pre-service education did you go through? Follow up, depending on what they have answered so far: Were there other experiences that you had that kept you on the path to becoming a teacher?
5. Everyone's first year of teaching is memorable. Tell me about your first year of teaching. If you could pinpoint five things that made it memorable, what would they be?
6. What do you think most helped prepare you for your first year of teaching?
7. Teachers typically feel discouraged at some point in their first few years of teaching. What about you? What helped you keep going? Tell me more...
8. What are some of your personal strengths as a teacher? What are some of your instructional strengths as a teacher?
9. Reflecting on your teaching experience, what people or experiences have most influenced your teaching?

10. As a teacher that has been teaching for ____ years, are there days when you question your choice to become a teacher?
11. With the teaching experience you have already accumulated, do you see yourself remaining in the teaching profession for the long term? Follow up: What factors do you think about while making that decision?
12. People tend to think of teaching as working alone with students in the classroom, but teachers interact with a lot of other adults as part of their work. They might interact with support staff, counselors, the principal, or other teachers. Thinking about the people you work with, how do they influence your teaching?
13. Some teachers talk about specific practices or activities at their school site that have helped them develop their teaching strategies. They might mention administrative evaluations, grade level collaboration, professional development, even consistent interaction with certain people. Thinking about your school, what are some of the practices at the site that have helped improve your teaching?
14. A school's surrounding community can greatly affect the successes or challenges a teacher faces. Are there aspects of your school community that allow you to be successful with your students? Follow up: Are there aspects of your school or school community that inhibit success with your students?
15. Over the course of their career, some teachers can pinpoint specific activities that have helped to develop their expertise in the classroom. Are there activities, that perhaps have changed over time, that you currently engage in that add to your effectiveness as a teacher?
16. 40% of novice teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching. Is that a statistic that surprises you? How do you explain that statistic?
17. Thanks for telling me about your teaching experiences, what else might help me understand how your first years of teaching went/have been going?

Appendix C

School Context and Community Information Grid

School Name*	Ethnic Demographics in %	DI	% Of ELL	CST Achievement Scores	% of EDS	School Location- Urban Residential or Urban Commercial	Parent and School Interaction
Kennedy	45 Latino 28.9 Filipino 13.4 White 6.6 African-American 4.2 Asian	Yes	25.5	74% Proficient in LA 85% Proficient in Math Academic Performance Index: 896	17.1	Urban Residential	Active Parent Newsletter Letters From Principal Communication in Spanish and English
Explorer	58.8 Latino 12.5 Filipino 14.9 White 6.8 Asian 5.2 African-American	No	33.7	64% Proficient in LA 70% Proficient in Math Academic Performance Index: 854	24.9	Urban Residential	Very extensive website with lots of parental info. Communication in Spanish and English
Lincoln	89.5 Latino 4.9 White 2.8 Filipino 2.4 African-American 0.3 Asian	No	67.5	59% Proficient in LA 70% Proficient in Math Academic Performance Index: 854	81.8	Urban Commercial	Not a lot of parent correspondence
Riverbank	88.3 Latino 3.1 White 2.2 Filipino 4.6 African-American 0.3 Asian	Yes	67.7	62% Proficient in LA 79% Proficient in Math Academic Performance Index: 858	81.1	Urban Commercial	Not a lot of evident of parent communication or involvement

*All school names are pseudonyms
DI=Dual Immersion Program
ELL=English Language Learners
EDS=Economically Disadvantaged Students
CST=California Standardized Tests

Appendix D

Code Book Including Themes, Codes, Descriptions and Frequencies

Interview Themes and Dominating Codes	Code definition	Code Totals
Commitment to the Teaching Profession		
1. Behavior Problems	The participant discussed commitment in terms of experiencing too many behavior problems; severe or consistent.	7
2. Job Instability	The participant discussed commitment in terms of leaving the profession for a higher paying job.	9
3. Liking/being passionate about what she does	The participant discussed commitment in terms of the passion they had for teaching and liked teaching as a career.	16
4. Pressure to Perform	The participant discussed commitment in terms of the pressure to perform during observations or on standardized tests.	8
5. Too much/overwhelmed by workload	The participant discussed being committed to the teaching profession because of student growth or student relationships.	10
Community Context		
6. Teacher Beliefs and Community Context	Comments the teacher made in reference to the community she works in including student demographics, community resources, and parental involvement.	21
Early Teaching Experiences		
7. Administration Support	The novice teacher has the support of her administration.	17
8. Behavior Management Problems/including Severe	The novice teacher experienced mild to severe behavior problems during the first five years of teaching.	20
9. Colleague Support/Collaboration	The novice teacher received consistent support from or collaborated with her colleagues.	37
10. Job Instability	The novice teacher is unsure of whether she will have a teaching position at the same school next year.	16
11. Overwhelmed by Workload	The novice teacher was overwhelmed by workload and keeping up with job demands.	14
12. Parent Interaction	The novice teacher experience positive parent interaction.	9
13. Piecemeal Job Assignments	The novice teacher worked in a variety of teaching capacities before landing their permanent teaching job.	11
14. Pressure to Perform	The novice teacher experienced a lot of pressure from administration to perform during in class observations or during standardized testing.	10
15. Support Staff Support	The novice teacher had the support of school counselors, school psychologists, resources	14

	teachers, math and reading coaches.	
16. The students; their growth and progress	The novice teachers have experiences where their students made tremendous academic growth and progress.	11
17. Training or Professional Development	The novice teacher went through a lot of professional development, including BTSA.	9
Experiences that Led to Feelings of Effectiveness		
18. Credential Program Strengths	The novice Teacher feels confident in the strategies they learned during their credential program.	8
19. Professional Development/Classroom Instructional Strategies	The novice teacher feels confident in certain classroom strategies because of professional development, teacher observations, or other teacher modeling.	29
20. Successful previous experience with Children	Any consistent children experience the novice teacher had that developed feelings of effectiveness in the classroom.	12
21. Teacher Collaboration or Support	The novice teacher felt more effective once collaborating with their team or colleague.	9
General Personal Feelings of Effectiveness		
22. Feelings of Effectiveness	These are general beliefs or feelings that the participants expressed about their confidence in themselves in relation to the classroom.	31
Pre-Teaching Experiences		
23. Formal Pre-Teaching Experiences	These are formal (paid) experiences that a participant had before pursuing a teaching credential. These experiences could have happened during high school or after. Examples include: babysitting, coach, tutoring, nannying, high school volunteer, and camp counselor.	28
24. Personal pre-teaching experiences	These are experience that may have happened in their own lives during their K-12 experiences or in their early childhood.	31
25. Teacher Education/Credentialing Experiences	These are experiences that the novice teacher had after they became certified and before they got their permanent teaching job.	19
Teacher Beliefs		
26. Academic and Social growth for kids	The novice teacher believes that teaching is about providing students the academic and social growth of students. They do this by providing positive learning experiences through engaging, and exciting lessons.	17
27. Being a Good Role Model	The novice teacher believes that teaching is about being a good role model for students to follow.	4
28. Empowering/Inspiring Students to Learn	The novice teacher believes that teaching is about empowering and inspiring students to learn.	5
29. Fill a Social Role	The novice teacher believes that teaching is about	4

- filling a social role for the students, such as a mother figure.
30. Social justice The novice teacher believes that teaching is about addressing the inequalities that they see their kids face by teaching them academic skills. 4

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