THE APPLICATION OF DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

THROUGH A SOCIOCULTURAL LENS

A Project

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Danielle Sisneros

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Abstract

of

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Developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) are the gold standard for teaching practices in early childhood education. NAEYC developed DAP in order to provide classrooms for young children that foster learning and development. These DAP standards were derived from research of learning and developmental theories. Early educators are expected to uphold to the high standards of DAP without the proper theoretical understand to put DAP into practice. This Master's Project addresses that problem by aligning sociocultural developmental theory (SCDT) to DAP in order to strengthen the theory/practice connection for practitioners. The handbook was developed to give early educators the theoretical knowledge of SCDT in order to put DAP into practice. The handbook was evaluated by practitioners in the field of early childhood education to gather feedback on handbook contents and usefulness.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A sea of change has occurred in recent years in the early education field.

Practitioners and scholars argue the importance of focusing on the "whole child" (e.g.,

Bell, Greenfield, Bulotsky-Shearer & Carter, 2016; Tischler, 2014). This concept refers

to the consideration of the development of all aspects of the child. The goal is to better

prepare children for future success by considering not only academics, but also

social/emotional development, health, and culture. In light of this new perspective, there

is a major shift in early education in the way early educators are expected to interact with

children and has resulted in new standards for fostering the development of young

children. An organization in early childhood education, the National Association for the

Education of Young Children (NAEYC), has gathered research on the learning and

development of young children and comprised standards for working with young children

known as developmentally appropriate practices (DAP).

Developmentally appropriate practices are the gold standard in early childhood

education (Hatch, 2012). DAP are practices that are grounded in developmental theory

and provide a framework for educators that outlines best practices and learning outcomes

for early education. Programs that are accredited by NAEYC for using DAP are held in

very high regard. Most early childhood programs strive to implement developmentally

appropriate practices. This feat is not easy and often results in many practitioners

diverting from DAP. Due to this challenge, few programs become accredited by

NAEYC. This Master's Project will address a major reason why practitioners deviate from DAP, that is, a lack of consistent use of the most compatible theoretical framework when applying DAP. This project will also assist educators in utilizing the principles of sociocultural developmental theories to adapt to the routine and emergent problems during teaching and learning activities.

Socio-Cultural Developmental Theory

Piagetian Theory

A fundamental idea of Piagetian theory is that development precedes learning. Piaget and scholars following his theoretical frame believe that structures inside the brain have to be developed in order for children to learn new things. They work from the premise that all children develop by fitting all new information in to their current schemas through cognitive adaptation strategies such as accommodation and assimilation (Flavell, 1996). Piaget was a pioneer in the child development field by conveying the impact of the environment on the child's development. Although much of Piaget's work has opened the child development field to bigger questions about cognition and children's learning, his theory focuses on the child alone, and how they intrinsically create learning opportunities (Flavell, 1996). These concepts are in direct contradiction to Vygotsky's theory of learning and development, and the focus on individualistic learning challenges the fundamental premise of DAP.

Vygotskian Theory

The current project covers the most significant theoretical underpinning of developmentally appropriate practices; sociocultural developmental theory from the work of Russian psychologist Lev S. Vygotsky. Sociocultural developmental theory (SCDT) addresses the major shift in early education to look at the "whole child" with the creation of DAP. This shift highlights the necessity to look at the child within the context of culture and the social world, rather than their intramental processes only. Sociocultural theory can be defined as a way to understand human learning and development within the cultural, historical and institutional settings in which they occur (Wertsch, 1991). This theoretical framework defines three major themes of learning and development that changed the way early educators approach the education of young children. The three major themes generated by Vygotsky are fundamental to sociocultural theory: 1) a reliance on genetic [developmental] analysis, 2) higher mental functioning occurs in the social world before it occurs in the individual and 3) all human action is mediated by tools and signs (Wertsch, 1991). Genetic analysis refers to the observable, qualitative changes that occur within humans and leads to the development of higher mental functioning. Higher mental functioning is a term Vygotsky used to encompass many mental functions that require regulation (e.g., memory, perception and attention). In short, to achieve this development, individuals must first learn from their social world and then later appropriate (or, internalize) these changes. This process of learning and development is done between interlocutors (speakers) with the use of cultural tools,

especially language. Within the learning and development process, children are reorganizing their knowledge of the world. The reorganization of knowledge using cultural tools is termed semiotic mediation. Thus, the three main theoretical principles of sociocultural theory are: 1) learning precedes development, b) learning occurs on social plane first, and c) is mediated by tools and signs. The importance of these components of sociocultural theory is that they all work in sync and cannot be considered separate from each other.

In the Western world, Piaget established a theoretical frame that highlighted the individual and the developmental processes that happen within the child before learning can occur. This idea that development preceded learning was still a common understanding for educators when DAP were introduced to the field in the 1980s. The most significant shift that DAP made in early childhood education was the importance it placed on the culture of families and children. This meant that DAP brought sociocultural theory to early education but without changing the Piagetian framework that dominated early childhood education classrooms. A careful reading of DAP reveals that practices characteristic of sociocultural theory are used as the foundation. This is highlighted by the use of the zone of proximal development and the implicit theme that learning precedes development, which are fundamental to sociocultural theory. Hatch (2012), cogently argues that developmentally appropriate practices were developed within a sociocultural framework, yet are often applied with the less compatible Piagetian framework. File (2012) asserts that DAP is often applied with the opposing frameworks of both Piaget and Vygotsky together. Due to the fundamental differences in how

learning and development occurs within these opposing theories, contradictions in application occur. When practitioners bring their previous Piagetian knowledge to implement DAP with a Piagetian frame, the sociocultural underpinnings of DAP remain implicit. The goal of this handbook is to make those implicit underpinnings explicit for practitioners thereby providing a resource for DAP practitioners.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice and Teacher Education

Within the field of early childhood education, developmentally appropriate practices are perceived as a gold standard for how to teach young children (Hatch, 2012). This is a pervasive idea across the early education field (File, 2012). However, existing quantitative research has been unable to consistently demonstrate that developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) support children's higher achievement in academics (Brown & Lan, 2013; Van Horn, Karlin, Ramey, Aldridge, & Snyder, 2005). Using a different methodological lens, Brown and Lan (2013) examined DAP in order to understand if, or under what circumstances, children's cognition develops within their learning context through the teacher's use of DAP. These qualitative findings suggest that there is a positive effect on children's cognitive development when teachers use DAP. They also found instances of negative effects on children's cognitive development when teaching practices diverge from DAP (Brown & Lan, 2013). Zeng and Zeng (2005) found that teachers who were less educated were more likely to engage in developmentally inappropriate practices. This research points to the first significant problem in the early

education field. When teachers are not properly educated, they are more likely to engage in developmentally inappropriate practice resulting in negative effects on children's cognition.

Hatch (2012) argues that DAP is grounded in sociocultural theories of learning and development. She also argues that DAP is not always applied with principles drawn from these theories. This lack of consistency in instruction results in a contradiction between theory and practice, leading to inappropriate teaching practices. Contradictions in practice occur when teachers attempt to implement multiple developmental theories when applying DAP in the classroom. In other words, teachers interpret developmentally appropriate practice without the most compatible theoretical framework. Teachers who attempt to use multiple theoretical frameworks in the classroom are less successful than teachers that apply DAP using SCDT (Marcon, 1999). Marcon (1999) argues that a Vygotskian framework could alleviate the dispute of child initiated learning and academic introduction with the use of the zone of proximal development.

Goldstein (2008), ties educators' understanding of the sociocultural theoretical underpinnings of DAP to higher academic success for children. This means that it is necessary for educators to understand the theoretical principles of sociocultural theory, how these principles undergird DAP, and how to translate these principles into appropriate teaching practices that lead to higher academic success for children. Herein lies our second emergent problem in the early education field. Few educators are applying DAP with the most compatible theory, a sociocultural/Vygotskian framework. If educators understood the importance of a sociocultural approach and its principles,

they would have multiple opportunities to contribute to higher academic success for the children in their pre-school programs.

A lack of understanding of the sociocultural underpinnings and theoretical application of developmentally appropriate practice leads to inappropriate practice and a negative effect on children's cognition. This Master's Project is aimed at remedying this problem by creating an instructional handbook for early-childhood educators that clearly explains and illuminates how to engage in a DAP approach that utilizes a sociocultural theoretical approach. This handbook is a resource for early-childhood practitioners by educating them about the most productive approach to DAP. The goal is to support practitioners in reaching high academic success for the children in their classrooms by using a consistent theory-based application of DAP.

Without understanding the above theoretical knowledge of a Vygotskian approach and its relationship to the implementation of DAP, practitioners lack the ability to adapt their practices to those that are explicitly described in the DAP literature. This lack of adaptability leaves practitioners at a disadvantage in their classrooms and can contribute to developmentally inappropriate practices. This project will help practitioners become competent in the implementation DAP strategies detailed in the literature. By creating a handbook that provides the theoretical and practical knowledge of the processes and strategies made possible by a sociocultural approach to DAP, practitioners will have opportunities to develop and adapt instructional practices that ensure higher academic success for children.

Purpose of Project

The purpose of the current project was to create a handbook detailing sociocultural developmental theory to help early childhood educators more effectively implement developmentally appropriate practices. The production of this handbook provided a clear description of the theoretical underpinnings of sociocultural approaches to learning and development, which allows practitioners to relate theory and practice in more effective ways. The goal of this project was to help early childhood educators' consistently implement theory-based applications of developmentally appropriate practices. Theoretically informed instructional practices are key to children reaching higher academic and social competencies.

Methods

Population of Interest

The population of interest for this project is early childhood educators who use developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom. A sample of these teachers were asked to read and evaluate the contents of the handbook designed to provide the sociocultural underpinnings of DAP. As a Program Director of a State Preschool Program and member of the Early Learning Administrators Leadership Academy (ELALA), I have access to administrators and teachers from early education programs across the Sacramento area. The ELALA cohort of administrators also consists of leaders

in the Early Education Division of the Sacramento County Office of Education and the

California Preschool Instructional Network. Access to this population allowed for

evaluation of the handbook by practitioners and policy makers.

Procedures

In order to develop the project handbook, I conducted an extensive review of the

literature, looking specifically at scholarly journals and theoretical books on the topics of

sociocultural theory and developmentally appropriate practice. After collecting this

information, I created a handbook that explicitly detailed why sociocultural theory is

needed to apply developmentally appropriate practice. I drew on the research to inform

practitioners of the basics of sociocultural theory. This allows practitioners to construct

their own understanding of what practices are developmentally appropriate and why. The

five chapters included in the handbook were: (a) Overview of sociocultural theory: Main

Concepts, (b) Cultural Implications for Learning and Development, (c) The Importance

of Relationships, (d) The Role of the Teacher, (e) From Novice to Master. These

chapters were generated based on their importance in both sociocultural theory and

developmentally appropriate practice.

Data Sources and Instruments

I disseminated the handbook to my colleagues at my own early education program

and participants of the ELALA cohort of which I am a member. I asked that each

participant complete an anonymous survey regarding the content of the handbook. The

survey has questions about the content of handbook (see Appendix B). The participants

did not provide any identifying information or gain any compensation for their

evaluation. The information collected from the evaluations was used to make changes for

future generations of the handbook. The updated handbook will continue to be used in

the future to educate the teachers that are employed in my preschool program.

Definitions of Terms

In creating the handbook, it was necessary to define several terms and theoretical

constructs. First, *Developmentally appropriate practices (DAP)* are practices based in

research on learning and development, and require an active role of the educator to meet

individual needs of each child to stimulate development. DAP are considered best

practices for teaching young children

Sociocultural developmental theory (SCDT) is the understanding of human

learning and development within the cultural, historical, and institutional settings it

occurs (Wertch, 1991). Within this framework, *intersubjectivity* is the negotiation of a

shared meaning between people. *Cultural tools* are either psychological or technical.

Psychological tools are cultural tools used to think with (ex: language, problem solving

strategies, etc.), while technical tools are cultural tools used to act on the external world

(ex: internet, pencil, white board). *Goal directed activities* are activities or tasks with a

goal or purpose.

In sociocultural developmental theory, *genetic analysis* or developmental analysis is the examination of development over time. *Semiotic mediation,* which is the reorganization of thinking (development) through the use of cultural tools-mediational and ideational, is the process through which development happens. Through that process, *higher mental functions* which are mental functions such as attention, memory and perception applied with self-regulation or control, are developed.

Limitations

There are some limitations concerning the population the handbook will reach and the information in it. The handbook was disseminated within the Sacramento area to multiple practitioners and child development centers but only to practitioners in Sacramento. It would be more beneficial to have a target a wider population than one city. Another limitation for this population is providing compensation for participants. Due to restrictions on monetary compensation for time to read the handbook, multiple practitioners opted out of reading the handbook. Finally, because the evaluation by practitioners was done after the handbook was complete, the feedback will not impact the first edition of the handbook. For these reasons, the usefulness of this handbook for practitioners may be affected.

This project produced some limitations for the effectiveness of the handbook. One limitation the handbook had was the effectiveness to provide change. Without doing research in classrooms with teachers who read the handbook, there was no way to

determine if the handbook provided the intended results. Another limitation was the lack of research on how much of the material participants understood. If employers were to distribute the handbook in their workplace, they would not be able to ensure that all employees comprehend the handbook contents at the same level to implement change. The final limitation was not having a facilitator for the handbook. A training may have been needed to make the handbook more accessible to early childhood practitioners.

Organization of the Project

This first chapter has provided an overview of the current project. Chapter two reviews the academic literature outlined for the basis of this project including Vygotsky's sociocultural developmental theory, and developmentally appropriate practice. Chapter three describes how the current project was created using the academic literature. It includes the population of interest, the procedures for creating the handbook, and the evaluation and dissemination procedure for the handbook. Chapter four discusses the results of the evaluations, conclusions reached from the project, and avenues for future editions of the handbook based on this project.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A sea of change has occurred in recent years in the early education field.

Practitioners and scholars argue for the importance of focusing on the "whole child"

(Bell, Greenfield, Bulotsky-Shearer & Carter, 2016; Tischler, 2014), or the development

of all aspects of the child. The goal is to better prepare children for future success by

considering not only academics but also social/emotional development, health, and

culture. In light of this new "whole child" perspective, there has been a major shift in

early education. The significance of this shift has changed the way early educators are

expected to interact with children and has created new standards for supporting the

development of young children. An organization in early childhood education, the

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), has gathered

research on the learning and development of young children and composed standards for

working with young children known as developmentally appropriate practices (DAP).

Developmentally appropriate practices are the gold standard in early childhood

education (Hatch, 2012). DAP are practices that are grounded in developmental theory

and provide a framework for educators that outlines best practices and expected learning

outcomes for early education. Programs using DAP that are accredited by NAEYC are

held in very high regard. Furthermore, most early childhood programs who are not

NAEYC accredited strive to implement developmentally appropriate practices. Such

implementation is not easy due to a lack of training in the theory behind these practices.

This explains why it is common for many practitioners to divert their instructional approaches away from DAP. Due to the challenge of consistently implementing DAP without a theoretical background, few programs become accredited by NAEYC. This Master's Project addressed a major contributing factor as to why practitioners deviate from DAP, that is, a lack of consistent use of the most compatible theoretical framework when applying DAP. Specifically, this project assisted educators in figuring out how to utilize the principles of sociocultural development theories to adapt to the routine and emergent problems during teaching and learning activities.

In the Western world, Piaget established a theoretical frame for child development that highlighted the individual and the developmental processes that happen within the child before learning could occur. This idea that development preceded learning remained a common understanding for educators when the DAP approach was introduced to the field in the 1980s. The most significant shift that DAP made in early childhood education was the importance it placed on the culture of families and children by focusing on the "whole child". This shift meant that DAP brought sociocultural theory to early education because this theory explained how to incorporate an appreciation of culture into instruction. This shift, however, occurred without changing the Piagetian framework that dominated early childhood education classrooms before the 1980s. Nonetheless, a careful reading of DAP shows that it describes practices derived from of sociocultural theories of learning and development.

The handbook developed for this Master's Project explores the most significant theory underpinning developmentally appropriate practices: sociocultural developmental

theory (SCDT) from the work of Russian psychologist Lev S. Vygotsky. SCDT characterizes the major shift in early education from intramental processes to DAP and the "whole child". This shift highlights the necessity to look at the child within the context of their culture and the social world. SCDT can be defined as a way to understand human learning and development within the cultural, historical and institutional settings it occurs (Wertsch, 1991). This theoretical framework defines three major themes of learning and development that changed the way early educators approach the education of young children.

This review of the literature will begin with an overview of sociocultural theory and the three major themes generated by Vygotsky that are the focus of the handbook: (a) a reliance on genetic analysis, (b) all human action is mediated by tools and signs, and (c) higher mental functioning occurs in the social world before it occurs within the individual. The review will then shift to and overview of developmentally appropriate practices and end with an outline of the handbook contents.

Sociocultural Developmental Theory (SCDT)

Sociocultural developmental theory can be defined as a way to understand human learning and development within the cultural, historical and institutional settings in which it occurs (Wertsch, 1991). SCDT has been developed further by many scholars since, but most are prominently based on the writings of Russian psychologist Lev S. Vygotsky. Vygotsky shook the field of developmental psychology in the United States when his

writings were translated from Russian into English (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992). His

theoretical framework defined three major themes of learning and development that

changed the way early educators approach the education of young children. The three

major themes generated by Vygotsky are fundamental to SCDT; a reliance on genetic

(developmental) analysis, the idea that all human action is mediated (reorganized) by

tools and signs, and the view that higher mental functioning occurs in the social world

before it occurs within the individual (Wertsch, 1991). In the handbook developed for

the current project, genetic or developmental analysis can be understood as the dissection

of observable change within human development. Higher mental functioning is a term

Vygotsky used to encompass many mental functions that require regulation (control);

memory, perception and attention, just to name a few. Mediation can be understood as

the process in which knowledge is reorganized, which is his way of referencing

development. A key element to mediation is semiotics, which is the defined as the use of

signs, tools and symbols for meaning making.

Vygotsky's First Concept: Genetic Analysis

Genetic analysis is the dissection of the processes of development by analysis,

which translates to observing how development happens as a qualitative change. This

qualitative change that genetic analysis dissects is a change of meaning that occurs during

development. Wertsch (1985) argues that the only way to understand human mental

processes is to consider how and where the processes emerge during development.

Genetic analysis is the analytical tool needed to decode the mental processes that occur

during development. Vygotsky targets the importance of studying the process of development, in order to understand how development happens within a context (Vygotsky, 1978, Wertsch, 1991).

Vygotsky (1978) also refers to genetic analysis as the historical study of behavior. He uses this type of analysis to see how development occurs based on one's historical and social influences during the developmental process. This idea forwards the understanding that researchers need to focus on what is happening during the process of change rather than looking at the results of change (Vygotsky, 1978). The aspects of studying mental processes outlined by Vygotsky (1978) are as follows; analysis of the process rather than outcome, analysis of changing and effective relations result in meaning, and analysis of development through which the social source can be discovered and reconstructed.

The first aspect of analysis, to analyze the process rather than the outcome, is crucial to being able to see how development is happening. When researchers analyze the processes of development, they can understand what meaning develops from practices by seeing where it comes from. The second factor of analysis declares that it must provide a window to understand causal, real or dynamic relations that can explain the development happening. Analyzing development requires that one can see the relationships that determine the meaning of actions or behaviors. These dynamic, causal or real relations explicate the necessity of understanding development within a social, cultural, historical, and institutional context. The third factor, that all development can be traced to a source, and can be reconstructed through the study of the process of

development, gives meaning to actions or behaviors. All actions and behaviors not only carry meaning, but that meaning can be traced through social and cultural influences on development. Within the context of an individual's social, cultural, historical and institutional world, researchers studying the process of how children develop can, through relationships, understand how they have reorganized their thinking by tracing where and how growth occurs (Wertsch, 1991; Stone, Underwood & Hotchkiss, 2012; Stone, Kerrick & Stoeckl, 2013). These three factors of analyzing the process of development lead to a significant argument of development for Vygotsky; the process of development produces qualitatively new understandings (Vygotsky, 1978).

The idea that development produces qualitatively new understandings is crucial in understanding how learning is key to inciting development. As individuals gain understandings within their social world in different times and places, they reorganize their thinking in order to develop new understandings of the world. The concept of qualitative changes in one's understanding explains a difference in kind of thinking, therefore provoking new developmental outcomes. When one's thinking is changed qualitatively they understand the world through a new or different lens than before, leading to development of their mental processes. When genetic analysis is understood in this way by practitioners, they can see development occurring as children engage in learning activities that are beyond their current level of development. In other words, practitioners who understand that learning precedes development, will have the tools to "see" and to analyze each child's developmental processes. Therefore, practitioners can structure learning environments to implement the DAP guidelines, to provide children

individual learning goals that are challenging but within reach when accomplished with assistance.

Vygotsky's Second Concept: Semiotic Mediation

The concept of semiotic mediation is central to Vygotsky's theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Cole, 1984; Wertsch, 1985, 1991, 2007). Semiotic mediation is the use of signs and tools to reorganize human functioning and cognition. The definition for "sign" used in this sense is a psychological tool. Examples of psychological tools would be, but not limited to, language, numerical systems or art (Vygotsky 1978; Wertsch, Tulviste & Hagstrom, 1993). The main difference between signs and tools is the way in which they are used to mediate the world. Vygotsky (1978) describes a sign as internally oriented, meaning that its purpose is for the user to master oneself as an internal activity. A tool can be a technical tool, an example of which would be anything with a cultural meaning or use, such as a pencil or a book (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch et al., 1993). Tools are externally oriented, meaning their use has an instrumental influence within an activity, leading to changes in the goal of the activity (Vygotsky, 1978). These tools and signs are infused within culture and the social world and change the way one interacts, thinks, and understands the world. This interaction between tools and signs in the social world leads to a reorganization of thought, semiotic mediation.

Wertsch (2007) deconstructs mediation into two separate types: explicit and implicit. Implicit mediation is a change in thinking brought about by natural language, a result of every-day communication. Implicit mediation occurs with little expectation or

intention of changing one's actions. Explicit mediation emerges for the sole purpose to reorganize thought. This type of mediation is brought about by a stimulus, for example, an instructional sequence. This means that an individual is intentionally directing another's organization of thought by introducing an obvious tool or sign to think or organize thoughts with.

A key element of mediation that often exists in the social world is the difference between the meaning taken in by the listener and the implications explicated by the speaker (Wertsch, 2007). This is often referred to as a collision; the speaker has intentions for the signs they express, and the listener interprets the meaning through their own cultural-historical lens. Through semiotic mediation, interlocutors will reorganize the way in which they interpret the meaning of the signs used. As one interlocutor says something, employing an intended meaning, it is dependent upon the second interlocutor to hear and interpret the same intended meaning to reach a shared understanding. If the intended meaning is not equivalent between the two interlocutors, misunderstandings in conversations occur. Using language to express an intentional meaning potentially reorganizes the thinking of the listener resulting in semiotic mediation.

Mediation occurs on the social plane through an intersubjective process. The intersubjective process is the process in which interlocutors negotiate ideas in order to come to a shared understanding. Through this process, participants negotiate what their understandings and implications for the sign are, and clarify to ensure mutual comprehension (Wertsch, 1985). Within the intersubjective process, we can see the relationships between the participants, their tools, and tasks in order to understand how

semiotic mediation occurs within the social plane (Stone et al., 2012). Understanding semiotic mediation leads practitioners to better understand their active role in the child's learning experience. An active role for practitioners is a core consideration for teachers who use developmentally appropriate practices.

Vygotsky's Third Concept: The Genetic Law of Development

The genetic law of development is the last fundamental theme that runs through Vygotsky's writings. This focus of Vygotsky's theoretical frame outlines that learning occurs on the social, or intermental plane, before it belongs to the individual, or intramental plane (Wertsch, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978). The intermental plane in this instance is understood as the social plane that occurs between people; in contrast, the intramental plane refers to the individual plane that occurs within an individual's mental capacities. Vygotsky connects this genetic law of development to his concept of genetic analysis by emphasizing that humans learn on the social plane and as knowledge transfers to the intramental plane qualitative changes within thinking or development can be examined (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985).

Vygotsky (1978) stresses that the genetic law of development produces opportunities for higher mental functioning. This thinking pushes the understanding for how learning drives development. Mental functions such as perception, memory, and attention are mediated through the social plane. Once these functions become controlled (i.e., regulated), they reach the intramental plane and become higher mental functions. Through intersubjective process with others in the social plane, children learn how to

control psychological functions with assistance before they are able to achieve them individually as higher mental functions (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985; Griffin & Cole, 1984; Rogoff, 2008). The understanding that all learning happens socially before becoming an internal competency is crucial to implementing DAP successfully. The genetic law of development provides sound reasoning for encouraging in-depth interactions between the child and their social world.

The three major concepts that outline sociocultural developmental theory are the driving force for understanding the significance of developmentally appropriate practice. Understanding how children learn and develop is a major contributing factor to implementing DAP guidelines. Without this theoretical knowledge, educators may not understand the reasoning behind the practices or what makes a practice developmentally appropriate.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) are a hallmark of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The concept of developmentally appropriate practices was developed in the 1980s with the release of the first version of NAEYC's position statement in 1987. The NAEYC position statement provided the first standards for working with young children to encourage learning and development. Copple and Bredekamp (2009) authored a book outlining developmentally appropriate practices, with the intention of providing a framework for the best practices

for children from birth through age eight. This book provided early educators an in-depth framework of appropriate practices grounded in theory of how children learn and develop (NAEYC, 2009). DAP encourages teachers to meet children at their developmental level and help them achieve goals based on the individual child's development. It provides standards for practitioners, meaning teaching practices must be developmentally appropriate for the children in the classroom incorporating the child's development and sociocultural contexts. Teachers are expected to derive their practices from documented developmental theories in order to provide a challenging yet achievable learning environment (Copple, Bredekamp, Koralek & Charner, 2013).

Developmentally appropriate practices are based on research into the processes of teaching young children to further development and learning. DAP focuses on the practices that foster the most desired developmental outcomes for young children (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Copple et al., 2013). This body of research led NAEYC to generate 12 foundational principles, three core considerations for practitioners, and guidelines for the five areas of practice (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The 12 broad principles accomplish two important aspects of DAP in that they inform practitioners about key elements of how children learn and develop, and they simultaneously highlight the deep roots DAP shares with SCDT (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Copple et al., 2013). Although the 12 principles were derived from theories based on research into learning and developmental theory, in DAP, they are not an in-depth look at specific theories and research used to substantiate these principles. The principles for DAP are an overview of what should be put into practice. The reason for this lack of explanation is related to the

early childhood field itself where "practical" know-how tends to be valued over theory practice connections. In fact, the point of this project is to overcome this cultural model in early childhood education by bringing to the surface and assisting educators to come to understand and appreciate this connection to improve instructional practice.

Two of the 12 principles are especially relevant in their connection to SCDT. The first principle of DAP is the importance of play as a vehicle for developing self-regulation and promoting language, cognition, and social competence. This principle addresses a major argument of SCDT, the importance of play for the development and learning of children. According to Vygotsky (1978), play is an important vehicle for the development of symbolic thought. Through play children learn to develop abstract thought. Additionally, play helps children engage in self-regulation by following the rules of play. When children engage in play they use the defined rules to change their behaviors and control their actions. When children take on a role during play, they personify a character and follow strict rules to adhere to the set guidelines. Through this process of creating imaginary worlds, play fosters language, cognition, and social competence. Vygotsky's theoretical treatment of play is what underlies a commonly held ECE principle: encourage children to engage in play and imaginative activities. Another principle of DAP is the idea that learning advances when children are challenged. This principle addresses the need for children to be challenged beyond their current level of development. This principle is directly related to Vygotsky's claim that children learn when they are given tasks just beyond their current level of development (Vygotsky, 1978; Griffin & Cole, 1984). In the vernacular of DAP, practitioners are

guided to create activities that challenge children. This general guideline, although not tied to Vygotsky, is directly related to his theory of child development. This principle of DAP is aligned with Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development where he specifically explains the relationship between learning and development.

The remaining principles are: (a)all areas of development and learning are important. (b) learning and development follow sequences, (c) development and learning proceed at varying rates, (d) development and learning result from an interaction of maturation and experience, (e) early experiences have profound effects on development and learning, (f) development proceeds toward greater complexity, self-regulation, and symbolic or representational capacities, (g) children develop best when they have secure relationships, (h) development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts, (i) children learn in a variety of ways, and (j) children's experiences shape their motivation and approaches to learning. These principles are intended to provide practitioners with realistic expectations for how children learn and develop.

The guidelines for practice focus on the practitioner and outline the expectations for teachers who implement DAP. The guidelines focus on five areas of practice and practitioners are expected to do all of them: (a) creating a caring community of learners, (b) teaching to enhance development and learning, (c) planning curriculum to achieve important goals, (d) assessing children's development and learning, and (e) establishing reciprocal relationships with families (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The guidelines create the framework for the practices that teachers should be using in the classroom. They provide information in the five most prominent areas of responsibility for the

teacher and offer examples of practices that are developmentally appropriate. Teachers are expected to uphold the guidelines in their daily practices to ensure children are successful in learning and development.

The three core considerations of DAP, when used together, achieve a fundamental component for practitioners: being an intentional teacher. Every practice outlined in DAP has a purpose and practitioners must consider what they know about child development and learning, each child as an individual, and the sociocultural contexts children are emerged in (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The core considerations bring the necessity of having intentional teaching practices to the forefront for practitioners. The core considerations of DAP, allow the practitioner to reflect on their teaching practices to ensure that the practices used in the classroom are purposeful and are enacted with reason. The three core considerations are: (a) knowing about child development and learning, (b) knowing what is individually appropriate, and (c) knowing what is culturally important. These considerations are the foundation to being an intentional teacher for any educator implementing DAP.

A major contributing developmental theory to the DAP framework is sociocultural developmental theory (NAEYC, 2009; Hatch, 2012). DAP has intentionally used SCDT to undergird the framework to account for the dynamic sociocultural context and how this context influences developmental outcomes (Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC 2009). It is not simply the context, however, that is part of the DAP approach. This framework is also grounded in current views of how learning and development occurs: constructivism (Bredekamp, 2009; NAEYC 2009).

Specifically, the 1998 version included a change in the way we understood how children learn and develop by incorporating a constructivist approach (Rushton & Larkin, 2001). This approach means that children are active learners in their context and construct knowledge rather than just absorb knowledge as previously thought by many practitioners.

Teacher Education

Developmentally appropriate practices are perceived within the early childhood field as a gold standard for how to teach young children (Hatch, 2012). This is a consistent idea across the early education field; however, the quantitative research available has been unable to consistently demonstrate that developmentally appropriate practices support higher achievement in children's academics (Brown & Lan, 2013; Van Horn et al., 2005). Rather than employing a quantitative methodological approach, Brown and Lan (2013) examined DAP through a qualitative lens in order to understand how children's cognition develops within their contexts through the teacher's use of DAP. The qualitative research findings suggest that there is a positive effect on children's cognition when teachers use DAP and a negative influence on cognition for practices that diverge from DAP (Brown & Lan, 2013). They found in classrooms where DAP was implemented children were using higher mental functions consistently. The teachers engaged in activities with children and helped progress their current level of development to the potential level of development (i.e., zone of proximal development). In classrooms where DAP was not being implemented children were discouraged from

learning, and even embarrassed when help was not given by the teacher (Brown & Lan, 2013). Zeng and Zeng (2005) found that teachers who were less qualified were more likely to engage in developmentally and culturally inappropriate practices, which have been since shown to produce negative influence on cognition (Brown & Lan, 2013). Although DAP was written with multiple developmental theories, Hatch (2012) argues that DAP is grounded in sociocultural theory. However, she argues that DAP is not always applied with Vygotskian principles and results in a state of uncertainty for the practitioner, leading to inappropriate practices. Goldstein (2008), credits children achieving the education standards and reaching higher academic success, to practitioners' understanding of sociocultural theory as the underpinning of DAP.

Teacher education is the crucial marker for effectively implementing developmentally appropriate practice (Zeng & Zeng, 2005; Brown & Lan, 2013). Zambo (2008) examined practitioners' knowledge about how children learn and DAP. She found that teachers knew most about the importance of strong relationships with children, but knew the least about how learning happens for young children. Zambo (2008) attributed this lack of knowledge about learning to a common circumstance in early childhood education; specifically, only one-third of the teacher participants had a 4-year college degree. The theoretical knowledge for how learning happens was not attained by attending professional development workshops or trainings. She asserts that children's learning processes should be discussed further in professional development trainings.

The purpose of this handbook is to inform practitioners of sociocultural developmental theory, the foundation for developmentally appropriate practice, in order

to connect further learning and developmental theory into teacher practice. Goodnough, Falkenberg and MacDonald (2016) examined the theory-to-practice relationships for early teachers and found that teachers must have a solid theoretical background that informs their teaching practices. The research shows that without the education and qualifications to teach using DAP, teachers are more likely to engage in inappropriate practices (Zeng & Zeng, 2005). Inappropriate practices have been shown to produce negative influence on children's cognition (Brown & Lan, 2013), therefore the solution is to implement DAP with the theoretical knowledge underpinning the practices. This should steer practitioners to maintain a positive influence on children's cognition and greater academic achievements (Goldstein, 2008; Brown & Lan, 2013). The production of this handbook provided the theoretical underpinnings to relate theory and practice, and thus lead early educators to greater adherence of developmentally appropriate practices.

Summary

The current project, *Applying Developmentally Appropriate Practice through a Sociocultural Lens,* was designed as a tool for practitioners to further understand the theory behind their practices. It was intended for a basic overview and connection of theory to practice, leading to a greater adherence of DAP. This handbook would be most useful for practitioners with limited exposure to sociocultural theory but with intentions to utilize DAP. It was distributed to practitioners who are new to the field, who have never been trained in sociocultural theory, or who need a refresher on the theory behind

the practice. This handbook is heavy in theory, with the main purpose to inform teachers of the theory behind the practices in which they are expected to engage.

The handbook covers the major themes of sociocultural theory: genetic analysis, semiotic mediation and the genetic law of development, in relation to how they inform developmentally appropriate practice. It incorporates the assertions of many neo-Vygotskian scholars who have contributed greatly to the understanding of sociocultural developmental theory and contains theoretical tools for practitioners to understand how SCDT informs and is used to apply DAP. The handbook will support teachers' reflection and application of their own teaching practices.

Chapter 3

METHODS

The theoretical handbook created for the current project explicitly details sociocultural developmental theory in order to effectively apply it to developmentally appropriate practice. The handbook is grounded in research to inform practitioners of the basics of sociocultural theory. This allows for practitioners to construct their own understanding of what and why practices are developmentally appropriate. The five chapters included in the handbook are; (1) Overview of sociocultural theory: Main Concepts, (2) Cultural Implications for Learning and Development, (3) The Importance of Relationships, (4) The Role of the Teacher, (5) From Novice to Master. These chapters were generated from the importance they carry for both sociocultural developmental theory and developmentally appropriate practice.

Population of Interest

The population of interest for this project was early childhood educators who strive to use developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom. A group of researchers were asked to read and evaluate the contents of the handbook designed to provide the sociocultural underpinnings of DAP. As a Program Director of a State Preschool Program and member of the Early Learning Administrators Leadership Academy (ELALA), the author has access to administrators and teachers from early

education programs across the Sacramento area. The ELALA cohort of administrators also consists of leaders in the Early Education Division of the Sacramento County Office of Education and the California Preschool Instructional Network. Access to this population allowed for evaluation of the handbook by practitioners and policy makers.

Handbook Development and Content

First, an extensive review of the literature was conducted looking specifically at scholarly journals and theoretical books on the topics of sociocultural theory and developmentally appropriate practice. The content of the handbook was developed from the information gathered during a review of the literature and was refined with feedback from professors of child development. The research pointed to early childhood educators' lack of theoretical knowledge of as a major deterrent for using the DAP approach. The research suggest that the more compatible underlying theory for the DAP approach is sociocultural developmental theory. The handbook created for the current project addressed these two arguments. It was created to inform early educators about the most significant theory behind the DAP approach: sociocultural developmental theory.

The literature search began with an examination of the DAP approach in early childhood classrooms. This search yielded quantitative and qualitative research that signified a lack of SCDT understanding, leading to inconsistent use of the DAP approach among practitioners. Further qualitative research pointed to the necessity of teacher's

knowledge of sociocultural developmental theory in order to more consistently implement the DAP approach. Supplementary research was conducted on developmentally appropriate practice and further in-depth research was completed on sociocultural developmental theory. Through the research, chapters for the handbook were created which focused on five similar themes from sociocultural developmental theory and developmentally appropriate practice.

The introduction to the handbook provides an argument for the creation of the handbook and addresses the intended outcomes for practitioners who use the handbook. The first chapter details an overview of sociocultural developmental theory addressing the 3 main concepts that are fundamental to SCDT: genetic or developmental analysis, semiotic mediation, and all learning occurs in the social plane first. The second chapter addresses the role culture plays in learning and development for children. The third chapter goes on to signify the importance relationships have for children's development. Chapter 4 of the handbook details the role of the teacher for learning. The final chapter explains the pathway children take as they develop, starting as a novice and eventually becoming a master of a skill or knowledge.

The handbook was then sent to two professors of child development for feedback, and based on the feedback, an appendix was added to include a list of terms and a chart including the guidelines, core considerations, and principles of DAP. A survey was developed and given out to participants with the handbook. The handbook concludes with a list of references for the information presented and suggested articles for further reading.

Handbook Evaluation

The handbook and evaluation was disseminated to colleagues at an early education program of the ELALA cohort of which the author is a member. Participation was optional, and each participant completed an anonymous survey regarding the content of the handbook. The survey consisted of open-ended questions about the content of handbook: (1) What improvements would an early childhood professional recommend for this handbook? (2) What is least valuable about this handbook? (3) What is most valuable about this handbook? (4) Would this handbook be informative for an early childhood professional? Why or why not? (5) Would this handbook be useful in an early childhood setting?

The participants did not provide any identifying information or gain any compensation for their evaluation. The handbook was distributed in PDF format with an accompanying survey for educators and administrators to return over email or in person. The participants were given approximately three weeks to complete the evaluation of the handbook. Twenty-five copies of the handbook were given to my co-workers and an additional seven were given to members of the ELALA administrators cohort. Of the 32 evaluations that were distributed, only four were returned. The results of the evaluation are discussed in Chapter 4, as well as areas for improvement and future directions for the handbook.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Developmentally appropriate practice is the gold standard for teaching young

children (Hatch, 2012). Teachers who teach using developmentally appropriate practice

create learning environments that promote higher mental functioning in young children

(Brown & Lan, 2013; Van Horn, Karlin, Ramey, Aldridge, & Snyder, 2005). Educators

who attempt to implement the DAP approach in the classroom without a theoretical

background in sociocultural developmental theory are less successful at achieving the

most effective learning environments for children (Marcon, 1999; Zeng & Zeng, 2005;

Hatch, 2012). When sociocultural developmental theory is used as the theoretical

framework for practitioners implementing DAP, children reach higher academic success

(Goldstein, 2008; Marcon, 1999). The research collected on developmentally appropriate

practice, and sociocultural developmental theory pointed to the need for a theoretical

handbook for practitioners to have a deeper understanding about the theory behind the

practice.

The purpose of this project was to create a handbook that informs practitioners

about the most compatible theory behind developmentally appropriate practice, and leads

educators to more consistent and effective use of DAP in the classroom. This handbook

addresses the major concepts of SCDT and how they relate to DAP. It provides

information for educators about the role teachers must adopt, the importance of

relationships built with children, and the learning process that children engage in.

Evaluation

Evaluation Results

Based on the four evaluations received, all four of the readers of the handbook found that the handbook would be useful in an early childhood setting. Although the evaluations received were limited in number, they provided revealing feedback. The teachers reported that the information presented in the handbook would be beneficial for their staff to know when implementing DAP. All participants reported that the most valuable part of the handbook was the theoretical constructs that outlined the most compatible theory behind DAP. They reported that the theoretical information would be beneficial for staff due to a lack of receiving this information in ECE classrooms. One participant reported, "This information is helpful for new teachers to the field, and for veteran teachers who need a refresher on the theory they should be implementing." However, two of the participants reported that the handbook would be more useful if it was used in professional development trainings put on by administrators for staff and parents. They reported that the content would be more accessible if a facilitator was present to break down and present the material to staff across multiple trainings. This was due to the concentrated theory provided in the handbook which they thought may be difficult for practitioners to understand.

Two of the participants reported the value in emphasizing the importance of play and using the child's zone of proximal development in the handbook. They reported this was information that many novice practitioners and parents may not know. Three of the

participants reported that the population that would most benefit from this handbook are early educators who are new to the field. Participants stated it would help early educators reflect on their teaching practices. One of readers reported that the handbook was written at a reading level too advanced for beginning professionals.

Limitations and Future Directions

As shown in the results section, the overall feedback on the handbook was positive, and offered direction for future iterations of the handbook. Some things that will be considered for future generations of the handbook would be to alter the format and make it more of a training guide for professional development. By breaking up the chapters into a professional development training it could be useful to provide more examples to tie theory and practice. Another alteration that will be considered is to change the language in the handbook to make it more accessible to early educators. These changes will be considered before the handbook is distributed again.

Some limitations to this project are acknowledged. The feedback was limited due to a small number of participants. Multiple people reported that they would have liked to participate but did not have enough spare time to read the handbook, and no monetary compensation for their time. This could be useful information for administrators who can pay their staff for professional development. Another limitation was the timing of the handbook's distribution. It was distributed in late April and participants were given 3 weeks to complete the evaluation. This was the time that college courses were ending

and finals were beginning. Prior academic commitments could have contributed to a smaller number of participants.

This project produced some limitations for the effectiveness of the handbook. The effectiveness of the handbook to provide change was not measured. Without doing research in classrooms with teachers who read the handbook, there was no way to determine if the handbook provided the intended results. This could be eliminated in the future if research was done on the effectiveness of the handbook. It would contribute to the large body of research about theory to practice connection for practitioners. Another limitation was the lack of research on how much of the material in the handbook was understood by participants. Employers were not able to ensure that all employees comprehended the handbook contents at the same level to implement change, and suggested to have a training to accompany the handbook. In the future, these limitations could be eliminated by providing a training with a pre- and post- test to see the practitioners' comprehension.

The handbook is not an easy read, and therefore may contribute to less practitioners finding time to read it. The content of the handbook was developed from theory and research, which may make the content hard to understand for some practitioners without the experience or knowledge. These limitations would be solved by creating a professional development training to facilitate the contents.

The changes that were recommended in the handbook evaluation will be considered and incorporated for future generations of the handbook. Changing the format into a professional development training with the handbook as a reference, will be

introduced for future generations. Each chapter can be broken down into its own professional development training. If the handbook is facilitated through a professional development training, it will eliminate the lack of understanding for some early educators. The handbook would be used more successfully with someone to answer questions or clarify any misunderstandings. The professional development trainings could provide a more in depth look at each chapter and would require some more research on the subjects. Creating a PowerPoint presentation or some sort of visual aid would be helpful for any professional development trainings.

The goal of this project was to create a handbook that explains the developmental theory behind the teaching practices expected of teachers. This handbook achieves this goal, and with future professional development trainings it will further the reach it can have on the early childhood community. This project helps teachers further explain to parents about their child's development and how they learn. As teachers gain more knowledge about learning and development, they contribute to the professionalism of the field.

Appendix A.
Applying DAP through a Sociocultural Lens: A Handbook for Practitioners

Applying DAP through a Sociocultural Lens: A Handbook for Practitioners

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As practitioners in early childhood education, we learn about Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) and the important role it plays in children's development. We learn which practices are "developmentally appropriate" and which practices are less appropriate. What we miss from this instruction, is how learning and developmental theory informs these practices. As a consequence, educators miss how to apply instructional practices using a theoretical approach. That is, theory-practice connections are missing in routine instruction. To help educators connect practice and theory, this handbook explains the most current developmental theory used in developmentally appropriate practice: sociocultural theory. The purpose of this handbook is to help practitioners understand sociocultural theory and use this theory to engage in developmentally appropriate practice. Why is it so important to tie sociocultural developmental theory to practice? At present, sociocultural theory is considered to be the most highly regarded and uniquely practical approach for DAP. Understanding sociocultural developmental theory (SCDT) will contribute to a clearer and more successful implementation of DAP.

Gaining a greater understanding of SCDT allows practitioners to know what makes a practice developmentally appropriate. The core components of SCDT and its practical applications are mirrored in the core considerations outlined by NAEYC, which mark knowing about child development and learning as crucial for applying DAP. When practitioners have a greater understanding of SCDT, they can better understand the significance of DAP. With this understanding of the relationship between DAP, SCDT and children's learning, educators can assess practices on their own to deem if they are developmentally appropriate. Without this theory-practice connection, educators do not have the theoretical (explanatory) and practical tools to assess and adapt instructional approaches utilizing DAP.

To adapt instructional approaches, we must first acquire a clear understanding of sociocultural developmental theory. Through the chapters in this handbook you will gain an understanding of the basic principles of SCDT consistent with the writings of psychologist Lev S. Vygotsky, and further understand how these principles connect to the core considerations, principles, and guidelines that inform developmentally appropriate practice.

Chapter 1

An Overview of Sociocultural Theory: Main Concepts

Across Early Childhood Education (ECE) classes, it is common to find a Piagetian approach to development. From this view, a child must be developmentally ready before they can learn. This is a direct contradiction of the many practices outlined in DAP. In contrast to a Piagetian view, the DAP approach draws from SCDT and the fundamental idea that learning precedes development. In other words, this theory emphasizes that children must learn before they can develop. At the core of Vygotsky's SCDT, there are three main concepts that characterize the entirety of the theory. The three main concepts are as follows:

1. Genetic analysis (developmental analysis)
2. Higher mental functioning in the individual derives from the social plane (social interactions with others)
3. Human action, social and individual, is mediated (transformed) by the use of tools and signs (Semiotic Mediation)

These concepts are entangled so deeply and build upon each other so significantly that they need to be viewed as a whole to understand the processes of development during instruction. Thus, it is crucial to have a clear understanding of what each concept is in order to make the connections between them. This chapter will explain each concept to provide the foundation for understanding how each concept contributes to children's learning and development.

Genetic Analysis

Genetic analysis refers to developmental change over time. The changes that occur are different in kind rather than different in quantity. This means that when development occurs, we fundamentally change the way we think and understand the world. In other words, developmental changes are not about counting changes or knowing more or less. Rather, these changes are about doing or knowing something fundamentally different. For example, when a young child comes to understand how to talk on a phone rather than, perhaps, trying to bang the phone on something. By

understanding the nature of learning and development as shifts in understanding, teachers can adjust their instructional practices so that they are beyond the current level of the child's understanding. In doing so, teachers use the child's current developmental level to decide what instructional activities will "lead" or function as the "buds" of their future developmental level.

When practitioners advance children's current development by creating activities that are beyond the child's current level, they are utilizing a DAP approach. To understand how such activities are related to SCDT, it is important to understand how Vygotsky explained this theory. Vygotsky referred to the current level of development as actual development. Actual development is the development that the child has already accomplished. Knowing a child's actual development allows practitioners to create activities that promote development by being just beyond the child's actual developmental level. The distance between a child's actual development and their potential development with assistance is called the zone of proximal development. SCDT requires that children engage in activities with assistance from adults or peers within their zone of proximal development in order to further develop.

Awareness of genetic analysis provides teachers an opportunity to understand how children co-construct their knowledge with the assistance of others. DAP encourages educators to look at each child as an individual to assess their developmental level. The purpose of understanding each child's development is to provide opportunities within each child's zone of proximal development. Offering children challenges just beyond their level of actual development contributes to higher levels of thinking and development.

Higher Mental Functioning Derives from the Social Plane

According to Vygotsky, mental functioning comes in two forms; elementary and higher. Mental functions include behaviors such as attention, memory and perception. Elementary mental functioning occurs naturally and without conscious control, seen in very young children during routine tasks. Higher mental functioning can be defined as mental functions used with intentional regulation (control). This means that children have

to intentionally regulate their use of such mental functions as attention or memory to achieve higher mental functioning. To highlight the difference between elementary and higher mental functions two examples will be provided.

> Elementary: A child remembering that they left a cookie in the car when they return and see the cookie.
>
> Higher: A child asks for a cookie, the parents says, "Remind me when we get out of the store and you may have it." The child agrees and when they walk out of the store 20 minutes later, the child says, "Remember you said I could have a cookie when we get out of the store?"

During elementary mental functioning, the child remembered that there was a cookie, but did not intentionally regulate (control) their memory in order to remember the cookie. In the example of higher mental functioning, the child intentionally held the cookie in their memory (regulation) in order to get a cookie after they left the store. Vygotsky argues that higher mental functions originate from learning in the social world. The example provided above demonstrates how the child learns to hold the cookie in their memory. Without the adult prompting the child to regulate their memory by asking the child to remind them later, the child may or may not have intentionally regulated their memory long enough to get the cookie.

Children must learn how to consciously engage in higher mental functioning. Early childhood professionals are continuously teaching children how to regulate their behavior because children are not born with the ability to do it on their own. Another example of how higher mental functions are derived from the social world presents itself when early childhood educators assist children in learning problem solving skills and strategies. This is seen when asking questions such as, "What materials do you need to help your friend build that castle?" DAP insists educators have an active role in learning activities with children so they learn how to regulate their engagement during activities. After children learn how to regulate higher mental functions, they can use them as tools for learning activities. It is important to note that the assistance provided by the teacher

in the above example did not tell the child what to do, but rather helped the child think and attend to what was needed for goal-directed activity.

Semiotic Mediation

Semiotic mediation can be defined as the reorganization of thinking through signs and tools. Tools in this sense are either psychological or technical. Psychological tools are used to think with (language, problem solving skills, etc.) and technical tools are used to act on the external world (internet, pencils, etc.). This means that everything we encounter in our social world through language, writing, or the use of any other mediational tool changes the way we think about our world (genetic analysis). The most prominent mediational tool written about by Vygotsky was language. Through the use of language, we learn about our world and learn how to engage within our world.

When we read written language, or speak/hear verbal language, it can potentially reorganize how we think. For example, think of the last time you read a rule posted on a wall; an example of this could be a "No Talking" sign. When you read that, it changed the way you act and think in that context; if you were talking before, you would stop talking when you read it. The point is that written language, as a sign system, can change how you participate within a specific context. This is a transformation of action and a form of development over a short period of time, referred to in developmental theory as microgenesis.

Everything that a child encounters in their social world has the potential to reorganize their thinking. Through such reorganization children come to understand how to engage with others to construct knowledge, to read books, to engage in art activities, etc. Equally important, as children's intellectual behavior is reorganized (mediated), they also learn the set of norms that are associated within different contexts. Understanding these norms help children utilize the mediational tools that are available. An important note for practitioners to understand as they relate these main constructs is that semiotic mediation is the process, or the "how", learning and development happens. Semiotic mediation is the process through which qualitative changes occur, qualitative changes being development. Genetic analysis is the analysis of this development over time that is

seen through semiotic mediation. These two constructs are intertwined and can sometimes be hard to separate for deeper understanding.

Early childhood educators need to understand how to use semiotic mediation and evaluate the process with genetic analysis in the classroom during routine learning activities to see development. By helping children reorganize the way they think and act to construct knowledge successfully, educators are indeed utilizing the DAP approach in an appropriate way. Further, teachers who use DAP consistently act as mediators for children to help transform their understandings of the world and construct knowledge leading to development.

Chapter 2

Cultural Implications for Learning and Development

Developmentally appropriate practice addresses a very central idea early on: Culture. Culture is an underlying theme across all practices that are developmentally appropriate and even in those that are inappropriate. DAP are in reality, forms of cultural practices and consequently should be examined through a cultural lens. These practices are repeated, transformed and shared with others in the classroom. Teachers alter practices that do not work for the children within the context, for example, if there is a long transition that leaves children waiting for five minutes the educator might evaluate that and alter the practice to have a mini circle time to alleviate the long transition. If the circle time is repeated, shared socially with the group, and accomplishes a goal (alleviating a long transition) it is a cultural practice. To look at anything in our social world without the context of culture is to look at something incompletely (i.e., to have a partial view of how knowledge is constructed). In effect, it is crucial to look through a cultural lens for everything in the social world to understand why and how it happens.

Often in professional development seminars or in child development classes educators refer to culture only through the lens of ethnicity or race. This framing of culture limits our understanding of learning settings, in and out of the classroom. A better approach would be to consider how we create our classroom cultures and how those culture's influence children's learning and development. As educators, we have the responsibility and the ability to create supportive, inclusive and highly educational cultures in which children learn. It is crucial that teachers stop examining culture by only looking at the cultural differences among children or their families. Rather, it is both helpful and productive to look at the culture constructed in the classroom and how this culture is structuring engagement in learning. DAP, with the associated view that the best learning is beyond where the child is currently, are the foundations to creating a classroom culture designed to encourage and support a successful learning experience for children.

Culture is a fundamental influence on how learning and development are mediated through the social world. Although culture has a historical existence, it is also continually created and recreated by repeating and transforming daily routine practices specific to a social group (having a schedule with sustainable routines). As we look at how children are learning and developing, we have to look at how educators are helping them construct their understanding through learning practices, one form of cultural practices. Because culture is at the core of developmentally appropriate practice, it is critical for educators to have a clear definition and understanding of cultural practices and how to use this knowledge to utilize DAP and better understand why children engage the way they do.

Cultural Practices

To understand what a cultural practice is and what it means for children's development and learning, I draw from Peggy Miller and Jacqueline Goodnow. Their definition of a cultural practice is as follows:

"Practices are actions that are repeated, shared with others in a social group, and invested with normative expectations and with meanings of significances that go beyond the immediate goals of the action."

This definition means that cultural practices change across contexts and time as the participants change. In other words, as different people with different understandings of a practice move in and out of social spaces, the movement can influence or change a cultural practice. A shift or change in practice is often seen by educators when specific teachers leave or enter a room. That is, the presence of different teachers in the classroom can change the way children engage in learning. Why is this the case? From children's prior experiences with learning practices structured by a specific teacher, children will interpret the presence of this teacher as requiring particular ways to engage in learning. Thus, children understand that the repeated actions and interactions that create a learning practice also create the norms of a classroom. These historically and collaboratively created norms result in children having expectations for how to engage in

knowledge construction with particular teachers. And, to be sure, children use these expectations to regulate (control) their behavior in learning activities.

Variation in cultural practices can change the nature of participation in a learning context. This is an important element for implementing DAP. Cultural practices, specifically learning practices, have an important impact on children's learning and development. How teachers structure their classroom management, discipline, and curriculum changes the way children engage in learning. The use of DAP from a sociocultural perspective allows educators to organize and create classroom management, disciplinary, and curricular approaches that contribute to more successful participation in learning for children. This is the reason why it is important to first understand SCDT and its relevance to DAP as an early educator. DAP offers learning practices grounded in SCDT that allow for a safe and highly functioning learning environment for children, an environment that draws from our most current understandings of children's development in context.

The one thing that is often over looked by educators is that learning is a cultural practice and children need to be taught how to engage in learning practices. When teachers are using DAP and SCDT, they are mediating how learning is expected to take place in the cultural context of the classroom. Teachers in the classroom help children come to understand that the most productive learning practices are those that require social interactions with others. But these social interactions are a portion of the whole that makes up tasks (activities) that are beyond what the child currently knows/understands. Such tasks help the child reach higher mental functioning, that is, the control of their thoughts and behavior to accomplish goal-directed activities. Yet, it is also important for educators to understand that children need assistance from adults to reorganize their understanding of how to learn and engage in higher level thinking for development to occur. This assistance is crucial because learning activities beyond where the child is will have some level of ambiguity. That is, children will not yet know how to accomplish the activity and will need to learn how to help each other, ask for help, and/or receive help.

All learning practices used in classrooms can transform the way children engage in learning. Knowing this explains why the teacher's instructional role is a fundamental aspect of DAP. The main goal of educators is to provide the best and most successful learning experience for children. If educators are not aware of the cultural practices they use in the classroom or not aware of the impact cultural practices carry then instructional goals cannot be met. Instructional practices select for developmental outcomes, meaning the educator's choices in practice change the way children engage, and therefore impact learning and development. In order to acknowledge the cultural practices we engage in, we have to look at the relationships in our social world. Stone, Underwood and Hotchkiss, developed a theoretical tool to address the relationships that occur in a cultural practice (i.e., the relational habitus). The relational habitus (RH) is a tool used to look at how the social interactions and tool use of learning are structured during routine instructional practices. It breaks down the relationship between self, tools, tasks, and others to see how a learning practice structures the way children construct knowledge with others. A diagram of the RH is shown in figure 1 below.
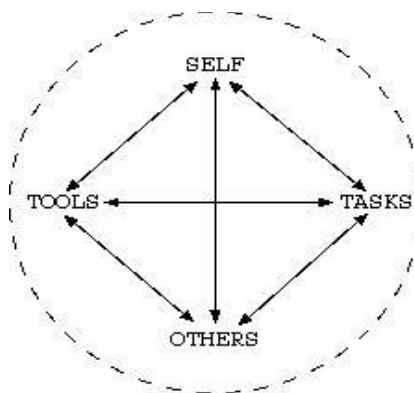
Figure 1: Adapted from Lynda Stone, 2017

This diagram shows how an individual child's engagement in learning is interwoven with other peers and/or their teacher, and their use of the available tools (e.g., language, books, art supplies, etc.). Put simply, it is unproductive to consider the learning of an individual child without considering her/his interrelationship with others, tools, and the task. Once educators can begin to break down their instructional practices they can understand how learning is occurring and can adjust how it is organized. The

point is that the RH diagram/tool can be used as an investigational tool or guide to help educators reflect on their instructional practices in relation to implementing a productive DAP approach.

When educators use DAP in their classrooms and continuously reflect upon their developmentally appropriate practices, they can create a culture where children are successful. This is the fundamental reason why DAP is thought of as the "gold standard" for early childhood education. Unfortunately, it is often the case that educators are not aware, when they use these developmentally appropriate practices, they are also creating a culture and implementing cultural practices that foster learning and development. Knowledge of the sociocultural underpinnings of DAP fills in this missed opportunity and makes clear the importance of DAP.

Chapter 3
The Importance of Relationships

In sociocultural developmental theory, social interactions and the emerging relationships created during these social interactions are the catalysts not only for learning and development but also for establishing genuinely supportive environments. Without relationships, learning is not possible, and without learning, development is not attainable. The importance of relationships is also a key marker for DAP. To know about each child's development and culture, the educator must build a relationship with the children and the families they serve.

One of the principles that inform DAP is that children need consistent and secure relationships in order to develop most effectively. Without these relationships children's development and learning opportunities are limited. This principle is supported by the importance SCDT places on relationships for learning.

Intersubjectivity

Sociocultural developmental theory takes the stance that children learn through their social world where relationships are built. If learning precedes development, children have to learn how to engage in learning practices. The only way that is going to happen is through interactions between people in their social world as they engage in tasks and use tools. In order for learning to happen, intersubjective processes of meaning-making must occur. Specifically, intersubjectivity is the process of negotiating a shared meaning between people. Although this term is commonly used in SCDT, we find ourselves asking what is meant when someone says "intersubjectivity." To be clear, the reason this term is used often is related to the important role it plays in semiotic mediation, the use of tools and signs to reorganize thinking. Recall, the reorganization of thinking is a form of microgenesis, or small developmental changes during learning. Intersubjective processes are accomplished with language, a cultural tool. Thus, the use of language (within social interactions) mediates thinking, that is, reorganizes thinking. But, language is not the only cultural tool that affects thinking. Semiotic mediation

during intersubjective processes also occurs with many other types of cultural tools, for example, story books, crayons, rulers.

Cultural tools carry meaning for the people using them. Therefore, tools can have different meanings or uses within different cultures. Cultural tools can be technical or psychological. Technical tools are cultural tools used to act on the environment (ex: internet, pencil, white board, etc.). Psychological tools are mental tools used to think with (ex: language, problem solving skills, higher mental functioning, etc.). Humans use both kinds of cultural tools daily in order to engage in their social world.

When children come into a social situation, they can only reference what they gained from previous experiences. If children learn at home to scream until their parent gives in to their demands, they bring that acquired skill to every new context. All children can learn new skills and strategies, and they can also learn to control or change what they already know. Because children learn about their social world through interactions, it is the responsibility of the teacher to help them understand the norms and expected ways of problem solving in the classroom. Educators can do this by building relationships with children and through the intersubjective process of meaning making.

Through these intersubjective processes, children negotiate the meaning of their world, in their classroom with someone else. Children can come to understand what and how things work in the specific contexts when they negotiate meanings of what is expected of them and how to meet those expectations. Yes, it is true that children bring their previous knowledge and experience to their new context but they use these as the foundation for constructing new knowledge. As practitioners, it is important for us to appreciate how children construct new knowledge, and it is equally important for us to build a close and respectful relationship with children in order to help them come to understand new ways of being in a learning setting. In effect, if we do not appreciate what children know, we cannot effectively help them construct more complex knowledge.

The Zone of Proximal Development

In this gap between the child's current knowledge and their potential knowledge is where the zone of proximal development emerges. The zone of proximal development is the distance between a child's actual development and the child's potential development with assistance from a more capable other. A principle of DAP addresses the need for children to have challenges just beyond their current level of development, which supports the emergence of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD concept is often confused with scaffolding in early education. Scaffolding was not a term used by Vygotsky, nor one that particularly supports the idea that the child plays a role in developmental changes in thinking. A close look at the idea of scaffolding reveals it uses the concept of more or less help given to the child based on the adult's perception of the child's learning. Scaffolding is a strategy that places an adult in charge of directing change in development for a child. The major problem to this idea is related to goal-directed activities. The scaffolding metaphor, leads educators to believe that goals must be predetermined by the adult with the child playing only a passive role. This implicitly frames the child as inactive in relation to their own learning. Yet, the intent of development in SCDT is to produce new learning goals that are shared between the child and the adult, not simply goals predetermined by the adult. This means that both the adult and the child play an active role in learning activities. During this active role, the child and adult engage in semiotic mediation by negotiating the shared meaning-making process (intersubjectivity). Through this process of meaning-making the child's thinking is reorganized (semiotic mediation) and ultimately the child develops, meaning their potential developmental level becomes their actual developmental level. As a child moves through their zone of proximal development, small developmental changes occur and can be seen through genetic analysis.

The second problem with the scaffolding metaphor is that it limits how educators conceptualize learning activities. This problem was addressed by Leon'tev, on of Vygotsky's students and colleagues. Leont'ev, a psychologist who worked closely with Vygotsky, developed the idea of a leading activity to explain how the emergence of new

learning goals emerge in routine activities. ZPDs occur within leading activities, which are forms of cultural practices such as storybook reading or art activities. Leading activities are those routine tasks, such as a collective storybook reading of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears", that are beyond the child's current developmental level. In general, young children cannot read all of the words in this book. But, they can participate in this "ecological" or routine activity with the assistance of an adult or more competent other. Through this assistance, children can learn how to predict what will happen, they can learn how to sound out words, etc. Most importantly, they learn that reading is a valued way to engage in the world. By participating in an activity such as the reading of a book or solving a puzzle, the purpose of a leading activity becomes clear: it is to trigger development and promote development beyond the current competency of the child.

Vygotsky argued that play acts as a leading activity for children, creating an opportunity for development. Play is not seen as pleasure within this view, rather a rich opportunity to satisfy needs for development. Vygotsky asserts that through play, the zone of proximal development emerges due to the role children take on through play. Children become much older than themselves, rather they "act" as they think the persona they are impersonating would act. An example, is when children pretend to be the "Mommy" during play: the child does not know how to be a mother, as they are only a child, but they take on a role much further from their development and embody it. They become what they think a "Mommy" is, and act as they perceive the right actions of a "Mommy" to be. Play activities provide opportunities for children to mature and self-regulate by structuring rules to be followed. All play has rules that must be followed, "Mommies" have to act a certain way, the ground is lava so do not touch it, etc. Children demonstrate self-regulation and ability to follow rules during play. These are opportunities for children to master skills and act on their interpretation of their social world.

As knowledge and know-how emerges through play and learning, the skills are mastered by the child, and become the child's actual developmental level and new

spontaneous learning goals emerge to become their potential development. In other words, as a child masters a concept in routine activities, they come to own that knowledge and it becomes part of their everyday understandings of the world. When they master a concept, new concepts are brought to light and become the knowledge they strive to reach with assistance.

Without understanding that children need challenges that are not too far ahead, but far enough ahead to stimulate development, educators cannot provide the best learning experiences for children. With deeper theoretical knowledge about sociocultural theory, educators can determine the level of challenge that needs to be provided in play and learning.   The relationships educators build are crucial to providing these rich and tailored learning experiences for children.

Chapter 4:

The Role of the Teacher

Teachers in early education are often thought of as "babysitters." This perception is slowly changing towards thinking of early educators as educators of young children. The role of the early educator is crucial to a child's development. For a long time, the role of the educator was to step back and allow the children to interact with their environment as development happens on its own (i.e., grounded in a Piagetian approach). However, the shift to developmentally appropriate practice has changed the expectations for the role of the teacher. DAP frames the educational context as one in which teachers are expected to engage in learning with the children, and act as a mediator of learning. In the DAP view grounded in SCDT, the role of teacher as mediator is necessary for the development of children.

As mentioned earlier, children learn about their world through interactions with more capable persons. This could be adults (teachers, parents, etc.) or more competent peers (older and younger). Sociocultural theory does not require an adult or older children to teach young children, but rather, any persons who is a master of the skill can be the teacher. This means anyone who is competent in the skills desired to be learned can teach another who is a novice. For instance, a four-year old with the necessary language capabilities can teach an adult how to play a game. The key to being a teacher (child or adult) is the competency they have in mediating a skill, that is, helping a learner make meaning out of an activity.

Semiotic mediation is a fundamental concept of sociocultural theory that is most often aligned with the role of the teacher. On a daily basis, teachers use signs and tools to reorganize others' thinking. SCDT and DAP make the argument that the interaction in which semiotic mediation occurs (intersubjectivity) is critical for children's development. DAP asserts that the teacher is essential in ensuring that children reach their highest potential of learning within their play. Play is most effective when educators create instances for children to problem solve, maintain attention and reach higher levels of

thinking with their peers and, at times, with an adult. This means that educators need to reflect upon ways to structure play so that children can engage in this activity often.

Higher Mental Functioning

The interactions children have with more competent others tends to increase their use of higher-mental functioning strategies such as using cues for memorizing or learning how to sound out sight words in stories or learning what to pay attention to. These higher-mental (regulated or controlled) strategies allow children to reach high levels of competency. This means that children reach the higher levels of mental functioning by learning to regulate their thinking and behavior during routine goal-directed activities. Goal-directed activities imply any activity that has a determined goal or desired aim. This can be anything from opening a marker for an art activity, to solving a problem with a peer. In the process of these goal-directed activities, children learn to regulate thoughts, ideas, and actions, which are how higher-mental functions emerge. It is important to note the three different types of regulation or ways children come to direct and control their thoughts and behaviors: self-regulation, co-regulation, and other-regulation. Children learn how to reach self-regulation, that is, their own use of higher-mental functions by engaging in the other two forms of regulation: co- and other-regulation.

Self-regulation is the use of regulatory processes to execute and sustain a goal-directed activity without assistance. An example of this is when a child begins to run in the classroom, then suddenly stops without being told to do so. As they begin to run, they regulate (control) their memory by consciously thinking of the rules, and adjust their behavior to follow the rules. Self-regulation is crucial to becoming a successful learner and reaching higher mental functioning. Without self-regulatory competencies, children are not able to control and direct their attention, memory or problem solving on their own. Consequently, regulation of such higher-mental functions as attention, memory or intentional engagement (volition) is what develops when children become competent learners.

Co-regulation involves engagement in shared negotiations and shared perspective taking to construct knowledge with others to achieve a goal-directed activity. This form

of regulation emerges through collaboration between persons and results in a shared responsibility to accomplish a shared goal. An example of co-regulation is when a teacher asks a child, "I see that you are running in the classroom, what other way do you think we can move through the classroom that is safer?" The purpose of co-regulation is to work together to accomplish a shared objective. The teacher in that example is asking the child to collaborate to construct knowledge regarding a safe way to move about the classroom. This example shows that the purpose of co-regulation is to work together to accomplish a shared objective.

Other-regulation is the regulation of behavior by another person to achieve a goal. This is often seen when teachers or parents use directives to regulate children's behavior. An example of this is when teachers say, "Use your walking feet, it's not safe to run in the classroom." The teacher in this example is using a directive to change the child's behavior, ultimately achieving a goal of being safe in the classroom. Although it is necessary to use other-regulation in classroom settings, it is also equally necessary to avoid using other-regulation as the only means of teaching. When educators rely solely on other-regulation for the construction of knowledge, such as telling children exactly what to do and how to do it, the child no longer plays an active role in collaborating to determine the goal of an activity. This limits the children's engagement in co-regulation, a productive means of fostering learning, and ultimately self-regulation.

Early educators play an enormous role in helping children develop regulation. When provided opportunities for collaboration by co-regulating, children are able to develop self-regulation. Once children have developed regulatory skills they become more competent learners. The goal of educators is to prepare children to be competent learners and developing regulatory processes is how that goal is accomplished.

Chapter 5:
From Novice to Master

Sociocultural developmental theory relies on the premise that learning precedes development. Meaning, learning must occur before one can develop. Barbara Rogoff (2008), describes the learning process as occurring on three observable planes found in all learning communities (or classrooms). Rogoff views learning as broken up into three observable planes that are intertwined through the learning process. The three planes are apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation. These three planes can be thought of as three parts of learning that make up the whole process. Rogoff considers the process of learning as collaborative, that is, as happening first in the social world and subsequently appropriated or later used by the learner.   The term appropriation points to an important aspect of sociocultural theories of development: one must participate in activities in order to gain an understanding of them. Most importantly, this aspect also applies to DAP because teachers must participate in developmentally appropriate practice in order to consistently use them.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is an idea used by Barbara Rogoff to capture the importance of the community engagement in learning. On her account, learning communities have norms, expectations, and rules for how to gain competency. What makes the idea of apprenticeship so wonderful is that it can be thought of as a tool for teachers to stand back and ask themselves: "What are the norms of participation in my classroom?" or "What do children expect to do to learn in my classroom?" These norms or expectations or rules are the ways in which children, novices of the culture (or community) become a master of a culture or community. Of course when educators stand back to reflect on this process they begin to see how relationships are constructed as new members (novices) of a culture learn the expectations from the long-time members (masters) of a community. This can be as simple as a new student who learns from a long-time student, or all students learning from a teacher. Interestingly, this understanding of how novices become competent members is also crucial to have in mind when training new employees

in DAP. Novice teachers learn what to do in the classroom from the teachers who have mastered the practices of the classroom. If current teachers are using developmentally appropriate practice, they will be enacting and thereby creating the norms, expectations and practical rules for this form of instructional practice for new teachers. In other words, early childhood teachers who utilize DAP grounded in sociocultural theories of learning and development in their classrooms become models of what apprenticeship looks like for a community. While apprenticeship reveals how communities are structured, the detailed processes of moving from a novice to a master are achieved through guided participation and participatory appropriation.

Guided Participation

Guided participation (GP) describes the interpersonal or between-people level of engagement for becoming competent. GP includes engagement in the cultural activities of learning, including observation and hands-on involvement. This form of participation is collaborative and involves others in the social context. Relating to DAP, teachers need time to observe and engage in hands-on activities to learn best practices of a DAP classroom. This learning is significant for the application of DAP, because teachers must begin to understand how to structure a range of activities within different contexts. Every classroom an educator may work in has different practices. All educators must learn how to work within each of these new contexts or classrooms. This is also true for children. Every child needs opportunities to learn the routine ways of doing things in any new classroom. This means that novice children and novice educators learn from masters of DAP classroom communities. Both, children and adults are able to participate in a DAP classroom culture with guidance. This guided participation is where learning occurs in children and adults. A related point is that educators have the ability to draw from their understandings of sociocultural theories of development to create productive developmentally appropriate practices and influence the learning of both children and adults.

Participatory Appropriation

Everyone must participate in the cultural practices of the classroom to understand them. Participation in practices stimulates what Rogoff calls participatory appropriation. Participatory appropriation (PA) explains how individual students develop. Put differently, PA explains how learning becomes development. As we engage in cultural practices, we not only learn about norms, expectations, and rules, but also how to construct knowledge by thinking and solving problems in goal-directed activities. While simultaneously learning about the cultural context and how to construct knowledge, children take these new understandings and this new knowledge and use it for their own purposes. When an individual child takes what she learning in one activity and then uses it in a different activity, this is called participatory appropriation.

Participation is required for individual development because knowledge is not just given, it must be constructed. This means for children to learn something new and later appropriate it, they must participate in the learning process. Through participation in activities, children come to learn how to regulate their attention, memory and strategies in order to achieve academic success (i.e., numbers, colors, letters). And because children learn first about their world through social interaction, their learning is mediated or reorganized through language and cultural tools - the process referred to as semiotic mediation. It is specifically through semiotic mediation or the reorganization of thinking, that cognition develops. So when individual children participate in routine activities where their thinking is changed (i.e., reorganized), they can then appropriate (borrow and transform) this information for their own purposes. Once children appropriate what they have learned, it becomes their own knowledge. Most importantly, once children have transformed knowledge and made it their own, they have reached the level of mastery required to teach the skill to someone else.

As educators, it is important that to provide enough opportunities for children to move through the three planes put forth by Barbara Rogoff. These three planes are the process through which children develop sophisticated skills and move through their zone of proximal development. The concept of challenging children just beyond their current

level of development is a fundamental idea put forth in developmentally appropriate practice. This way of viewing learning and development is not easy, but like everything in life, participation as a novice leads to appropriation as a master.

Disclaimer

With sociocultural theory coming to the forefront for best practices in early childhood education, it is important that early educators learn more about the theory. This handbook provides a brief overview of some of the main constructs in sociocultural theory and is not intended to be a comprehensive teaching of the theory. For more information on sociocultural theory or the information provided in this handbook, see the references list. This handbook was created for a Master's Project at California State University, Sacramento.

Definitions of Terms

- **Sociocultural developmental theory (SCDT)** is the understanding of human learning and development within the cultural, historical, and institutional settings it occurs (Wertch, 1991).

- **Intersubjectivity** is the negotiation of a shared meaning between people.

- **Cultural tools** are either psychological or technical. Psychological tools are cultural tools used to think with (ex: language, problem solving strategies, etc.). Technical tools are cultural tools used to act on the external world (ex: internet, pencil, white board).

- **Developmentally appropriate practices (DAP)** are, in short, best practices for teaching young children. These practices are based in research of learning and development, and require an active role of the educator to meet individual needs of each child to stimulate development.

- A **goal directed activity** is an activity or task with a goal or purpose.

- **Genetic Analysis** or developmental analysis is the examination of development over time.

- **Semiotic mediation** is the reorganization of thinking (development).

- **Higher mental functions** are mental functions such as attention, memory and perception applied with self-regulation or control.

Table Adapted from NAEYC Position Statement – Developmentally Appropriate Practices

12 Principles of Child Development	3 Core Considerations	5 Guidelines for effective teaching
1. All areas of development and learning are important. 2. Learning and development follow sequences. 3. Development and learning proceed at varying rates. 4. Development and learning result from an interaction of maturation and experience. 5. Early experiences have profound effects on development and learning. 6. Development proceeds toward greater complexity, self-regulation, and symbolic or representational capacities. 7. Children develop best when they have secure relationships. 8. Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts. 9. Children learn in a variety of ways. 10. Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation and promoting language, cognition, and social competence. 11. Development and learning advance when children are challenged. 12. Children's experiences shape their motivation and approaches to learning.	• Knowing about child development and learning. Knowing what is typical at each age and stage of early development is crucial. This knowledge, based on research, helps us decide which experiences are best for children's learning and development. • Knowing what is individually appropriate. What we learn about specific children helps us teach and care for each child as an individual. By continually observing children's play and interaction with the physical environment and others, we learn about each child's interests, abilities, and developmental progress. • Knowing what is culturally important. We must make an effort to get to know the children's families and learn about the values, expectations, and factors that shape their lives at home and in their communities. This background information helps us provide meaningful, relevant, and respectful learning experiences for each child and family.	1. Creating a caring community of learners 2. Teaching to enhance development and learning 3. Planning curriculum to achieve important goals 4. Assessing children's development and learning 5. Establishing reciprocal relationships with families

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Appendix B.
Handbook Evaluation

<u>Applying Developmentally Appropriate Practice through a Sociocultural Lens—</u>

<u>Evaluation</u>

☐ **By checking this box you are consenting to participate in the evaluation of this handbook.**

1. What improvements would an Early Childhood Professional recommend for this handbook?

2. What is least valuable about this handbook?

3. What is most valuable about this handbook?

4. Would this handbook be informative for an early childhood professional? Why or why not?

5. Would this handbook be useful in an early childhood setting?

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