

University of Denver

Digital Commons @ DU

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Graduate Studies

---

1-1-2015

## Navigating the Gap Between the Ideal and the Real: A Heuristic Inquiry with Teacher Educators Influenced by the Work of Parker Palmer

Eron L. Reed  
*University of Denver*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd>



Part of the [Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Reed, Eron L., "Navigating the Gap Between the Ideal and the Real: A Heuristic Inquiry with Teacher Educators Influenced by the Work of Parker Palmer" (2015). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 1077. <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/1077>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact [jennifer.cox@du.edu](mailto:jennifer.cox@du.edu), [dig-commons@du.edu](mailto:dig-commons@du.edu).

NAVIGATING THE GAP BETWEEN THE IDEAL AND THE REAL: A HEURISTIC  
INQUIRY WITH TEACHER EDUCATORS INFLUENCED BY THE WORK OF  
PARKER PALMER

---

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of The Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

---

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

---

by

Eron L. Reed

November 2015

Advisor: Dr. Bruce Uhrmacher

©Copyright by Eron L. Reed 2015

All Rights Reserved

Author: Eron L. Reed  
Title: NAVIGATING THE GAP BETWEEN THE IDEAL AND THE REAL: A  
HEURISTIC INQUIRY WITH TEACHER EDUCATORS INFLUENCED BY THE  
WORK OF PARKER PALMER  
Advisor: Dr. Bruce Uhrmacher  
Degree Date: November 2015

### **Abstract**

New teacher attrition shows no signs of abating as about half of new teachers in urban high-poverty schools quit in their first three years of the work. Some of the push factors that contribute to attrition in these settings are the increasing pressure of standards and accountability measures. Some research has turned to teacher education programs to look at the preparation of pre-service teachers.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the beliefs and intentions of four teacher educators who are also facilitators of Parker Palmer's Courage to Teach workshops and retreats, and the ways in which their beliefs influence their teaching practice. The conceptual framework is based on Parker Palmer's concepts of the real – what is, and the ideal –what we know could be, and the gap between them. The literature review provides concepts of the ideal and the real in preservice teachers, the function of teacher education as the bridge between the ideal and the real in preparing teachers for their careers, a review of identity development, and a description of the Courage to Teach program.

A transformative framework drives this study. The importance of self-knowledge and the development of the self who teaches as companion knowledge to the development of teaching skills and competencies will be discussed. A holistic versus one-dimensional approach to teacher preparation is explored.

The findings from this heuristic study are represented by the following five themes: (1) Multifaceted Definitions of Ideal and Real (2) Teacher Education: The Ideal as a Diverse Network (3) The Gap as Tragic and *Permanent* (4) Courage Work Changes Your Way of Being in the World (5) Identity as a Factor in Receptivity to Spiritual Work. These findings, the interviews from which they arose, and the phases of this heuristic study led to a creative synthesis represented by a Symbolic Growth Experience. The study concludes with the implications of this experience for the education community.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to offer my deepest appreciation for the participants who made this work possible. I am grateful to them as professors and as dear members of the Courage community.

My committee deserves acknowledgment for moving me through this effort. Dr. Paul Michalec is a constant reminder of “what could be” in our teaching and in our lives; he is an inspiration. Dr. Nick Cutforth is a deeply dedicated scholar, mentor, and true supporter of me and other graduate students in their work. Cheers. Dr. Paul Bruce Uhrmacher brought me into the University of Denver and served as my mentor in academia. Dr. Terrence Blackman did not let me fall and become an ABD – many thanks, t. Dr. Bin Ramke offered his kindness in chairing this committee of fine gentlemen.

There is a group of people to whom I am indebted for their support of me in this work because without them, it would have been unbearable: Joie, Matt, Courtney, Linda, Josh, Tera, Rebecca, and others who offered their wisdom and encouraging words in my times of doubt. Finally, as I wrote in a note to my mother when I was a child, she has been “keeping me on my way” all of these years and I am so very grateful for her love and support of all that I strive to attain.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Background.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study/Rationale.....	5
Conceptual Framework.....	6
Research Questions.....	9
Study Significance.....	9
Definitions of Terms.....	9
Summary.....	12
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	14
Introduction.....	14
The Ideal in Pre-service Teaching Candidates.....	15
The Real world of Teaching and New Teacher Attrition.....	16
Attrition.....	16
Reality in the urban classroom .....	17
Non-school factors.....	17
School factors.....	19
Teacher Education: the Bridge.....	21
Teacher Identity.....	29
Courage to Teach.....	31
History of Courage to Teach.....	31
An inner landscape.....	35
Identity and integrity.....	36
Seasonal metaphors.....	37
Paradox.....	38
A divided life.....	38
The tragic gap.....	40
Theoretical foundations.....	40
Practical foundations.....	41
Summary.....	41
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	43
Research Design and Assumptions.....	43
Heuristics.....	45
Participants.....	46
Research Questions.....	48
Data Collection.....	49
Data Analysis.....	52
Six phases of heuristic research .....	53
Initial engagement.....	53
Immersion.....	53
Incubation.....	55

Illumination.....	57
Explication.....	58
Creative synthesis.....	59
Data analysis strategies.....	59
Validity.....	63
Researcher bias.....	64
Limitations.....	66
Summary.....	67
Chapter 4: Presentation of Data.....	68
Introduction.....	68
Joseph.....	69
Elizabeth.....	79
Lois.....	90
Alex.....	102
Conclusion.....	112
Chapter 5: Analysis and Synthesis.....	114
Introduction and Methodological Reflection.....	114
Section One: Analysis.....	117
Theme 1: Multifaceted Definitions of “Ideal” and “Real”.....	117
The “ideal” possibilities.....	117
“The good”.....	117
“Habits of Heart”.....	118
The “real” – tempered.....	119
Summary of Theme 1.....	120
Theme 2: Teacher Education: The Ideal as a Diverse Network.....	120
University/school connection.....	120
Self-study.....	121
Variety.....	122
Summary of Theme 2.....	123
Theme 3: The Gap is Tragic and <i>Permanent</i> .....	124
Summary of Theme 3.....	125
Theme 4: Courage Work Changes Your Way of Being in the World.....	125
Professional teaching practice.....	125
Safe space.....	125
Deep listening.....	126
Third things.....	126
Personal shifts.....	127
Summary of Theme 4.....	128
Theme 5: Identity as a Factor in Receptivity to Spiritual Work.....	128
Joseph: the disconfirming case.....	128
Professional identity of teacher educators: researcher as sub-identity.....	130
Professional identity of teacher educators: context.....	132
Personal identity.....	133



Summary of Theme 5.....	136
Section Two: Synthesis.....	136
Symbolic Growth Experience.....	137
Symbolic Growth Experience of the Researcher.....	138
Joseph.....	138
Fred.....	139
Elizabeth and Lois.....	139
Alex.....	139
Integration.....	142
Growth.....	143
Conclusion.....	145
Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations .....	147
Overview of the Study.....	147
Research Questions and Themes.....	151
Theme 1: Multifaceted Definitions of Ideal and Real .....	152
Theme 2: Teacher Education: The Ideal as a Diverse Network .....	153
Theme 3: The Gap as Tragic and <i>Permanent</i> .....	154
Theme 4: Courage Work Changes Your Way of Being in the World.....	154
Theme 5: Identity as a Factor in Receptivity to Spiritual Work.....	155
Synthesis.....	156
Implications.....	158
Implications for Teacher Educators .....	158
Self-study/reflection.....	158
Modeling.....	160
Implications for Teacher Education Programs .....	160
Improve connections with K-12 schools.....	160
Advocate for a more comprehensive preparation.....	160
Implications for School Districts and Schools.....	161
Improve connections with university programs.....	161
Resist standardizing.....	162
Implications for Teachers.....	162
Implications for Policy and Reform.....	164
Implications for Future Research.....	165
Capacity for self-study in preservice.....	165
Language and practice.....	166
Closing Comment.....	167
Afterword.....	168
References.....	170
Appendices .....	184
Appendix A .....	184

Appendix B .....	185
Appendix C .....	187
Appendix D .....	188
Appendix E .....	190
Appendix F.....	191
Appendix G.....	193
Appendix H.....	196

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

There's something awry in our schools that is exacting an emotional, physical, and spiritual toll on our teachers...at least half of all new teachers leave the profession by the time they reach their fifth year of teaching. Others slog on, feeling demoralized and sapped of the energy and idealism that sparked their original choice of profession. (Intrator, 2002, p.xxxix)

### **Background**

This study emerged from my experience as an elementary teacher in two high-poverty schools in an urban district. Over 13 years, I have taught roughly 695 students, not including those in summer school, after school programs, and those I worked with in my two years of AmeriCorps service. I was extraordinarily well prepared in my teacher education graduate program and my life circumstances to work with kids who have challenges. I have strong teaching skills, but my goal in choosing the profession was and is to reach the hearts of kids and build relationships while helping them learn content. Being a teacher has been hard, is hard, and will always be hard. It is harder now than it was 13 years ago, and like others in this work, I would not recommend the job to any but the toughest of souls nor would I suggest entering teaching today without careful consideration (Ayers, 2010; Intrator, 2002; Noddings, 2013).

The personal perspective that I bring to the study can be named my “subjective-I’s” (Peshkin, 1998, p. 18). There is a child-I who wants to be heard, appreciated, taught, loved, and given chances. There is a teacher-I who wants to be respected, honored,

appreciated, trusted, and paid (The professor-I wants the same.). The Courage to Teach-I wants quiet, calm, happiness, change, and openness. The community servant-I wants cooperation, energy, change, trust, and help. I must be transparent about these I's because although they represent bias they also have led to my research questions and method. The method for this study is a heuristic inquiry in which "the investigator must have had a direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated. There must have been actual autobiographical connections" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14). The questions for this study and the pivotal life experiences that drove me to this heuristic inquiry are discussed in this section to provide a historical background that led to this research.

The first experience was leaving my home in Cincinnati to serve two years in an AmeriCorps program in Denver under an education grant, working in a high-needs elementary school. I was called to serve society in some fashion and it turned out that I was a "natural" teacher, especially in my ability to relate to and build relationships with kids. Through work on service projects in AmeriCorps and work in the school especially, I learned about teaching and learning in a high-needs context and the challenges kids and teachers face inside and outside of the classroom.

The second experience occurred when after working in AmeriCorps, I returned to Ohio where I worked for a year in Head Start in the Walnut Hills neighborhood of Cincinnati during the riots of 2001 while waiting to start graduate study. With strong connections to the black community for the 15 years prior, it was a heart-wrenching time in which education and sociopolitical forces became very tightly bound for me.

The third was beginning the Masters program at the Ohio State University to formally learn how to teach, specializing in literacy. The one-year, Masters and licensure program was competitive and intense; I slept an average of five hours each night that year. I studied under the most prominent names in elementary literacy. My capstone study was conducted in Chile, focused on English language instruction.

Next, upon returning to the United States, I moved back to Colorado and began teaching for Denver Public Schools and have been doing that since. I am most comfortable teaching where I am most needed, and that means a high-poverty context. I have a deep reserve of resilience from my own life experiences. My work in AmeriCorps started to feed my service ethic, and my study at university left me better prepared than I knew at the time. Because I was a super-teacher (no exaggeration and no apology; our group from Ohio State really was outstanding), I felt nervous but ready for my first class. I struggled and have struggled in the gap between what I ideally thought teaching would be and what teaching is in reality, and I was *exceptionally prepared*. I began my career in 2002, the year after No Child Left Behind. What surprised me most about the reality of teaching was the amount of work involved outside of the classroom that I never appreciated as a student teacher or AmeriCorps volunteer. I worked in a school that was 95% Mexican-American and married a man from Venezuela. We visited there in summers, in the barrios of Caracas, and I came to know poverty in a truer sense.

The fifth experience was the Courage to Teach invitation that was sent to me through the Denver Public Schools email in my fourth year of teaching. I was not burned out, but I was burning. Courage to Teach offered me a space to reflect that I had never known

personally or professionally. I was truly renewed in my purpose of my work. I transferred to a school with a less toxic culture where there are 22 countries and 18 languages represented. I immediately encountered students with whom I had no common language and have since learned ways to work with families from many cultures and with students who have refugee status.

In the years since *Courage to Teach* and I have had increasingly more people involved in telling me how my teaching should look who do not know or acknowledge the people and relationships critical to learning. My teaching has been completely rubricized. I have seen new teachers enter the job and quickly leave it without the chance to reap the rewards of teaching – the joy, the laughter, the full heart. Finally, I began doctoral study with the idea that I might move into teacher education. My hope was that I could share with preservice teachers the reality of teaching and in some way prepare them to be resilient by holding onto and holding out for the things that make the job ultimately worth the anguish it can cause. This idea for this study arose as I turned to wonder: Is that kind of preparation possible?

### **Statement of the Problem**

New teacher attrition, what has been called a “revolving door” (Ingersoll, 2001), especially in high-poverty urban settings, has been studied at length. Contributing factors include: high workloads, lack of support, low salaries, and toxic school cultures and climates (Farkas, 2000; Headden, 2014; Ingersoll, 2001). Still, attrition in the first three years is around 20% and about half of new teachers in urban high-poverty settings quit (Berry, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Nieto, 2003). As the pressure on classroom teachers

increases with added standards and accountability measures, new teacher attrition shows no signs of slowing.

Some research has turned to preparation programs, asking what is or is not being provided to teachers in pre-service so that they can survive their first three to five years in the field (Day, 2000; Korthagen, 2004; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Michalec, 2013; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Tickle, 2001). Zeichner (1995, p. 12) cautions, “We must recognize the reality that neither teaching nor teacher education can be neutral... the everyday choices we make as teachers and teacher educators reveal our moral commitments with regard to social continuity and change.” The review of the literature will show in part how pre-service teachers who begin with a full heart and an idealistic view of themselves as educators lose most of this important and necessary self-image by the time they find themselves fully into their first teaching job.

### **Purpose of the Study/Rationale**

This study has a transformative purpose in that developing self-knowledge as well as technical skills in teacher education provides agency to pre-service and new teachers (Ayers, 2010; Day, 2000, 2004; Hargreaves, 2001; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Korthagen, 2001; Zembylas, 2003) as well as to teacher educators who prepare them. Faculty participants and I will collaborate to explore the phenomenon of the ways in which they experience the gap between the ideal – what should be, and the real – what is, in education. This will be shared and contribute to conversations occurring around the country about ways in which public education can become more integrated, not divided

into the silos of either technical, standardized or relational, holistic teaching and learning. This allows teachers to teach and students to learn in a “both/and” paradox where the whole persons are honored. (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006; Korthagen, Kim, & Greene, 2013; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006; Michalec, 2013; Palmer, 2007; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). In short, I am one of the teachers Parker Palmer describes in *The Courage to Teach* (2007):

...They love education too much to let it sink to its lowest form, and whether they know it or not– they are sparking a movement for educational reform by deciding to live divided no more. They affirm their deep caring for the lives of students, and they do not want to disconnect from the young. (p. 177)

The four faculty participants, also referred to as professors or teacher educators, are members of the Courage to Teach® and Courage to Lead® Seasonal Retreat Series Program. They are teachers and educational community leaders who have participated in as well as facilitated workshops or retreats. Courage to Teach is a personal and professional renewal and development program that is part of Palmer’s Center for Courage and Renewal (<http://www.couragerenewal.org/courage-to-teach/>). As part of the program, educators participate in retreats, the focus of which is to allow quiet space for teachers to bring the inner landscape and calling of teaching into productive tension with the external challenges of the current climate of teaching. Its work uses a common language and common experiences to bring these two realms to the forefront for reflection. I chose these teacher educators for participation in this study because of their focused awareness of the gap between the two terrains to investigate how they can bridge that space in their daily practice. The research questions led me to them as I search for



ways in which teacher educators may help bridge the gap through the development of self-knowledge.

### **Conceptual framework**

The framework for this study is based on Parker Palmer's (1998b, 2004, 2009) gap between the ideal and the real. The gap between the "ideal" and the "real" in this paper refers to the difference between what should be and what is occurring in classrooms in terms of teaching and learning. Concepts I include in the term *ideal* are: heart, calling, passion, and vocation. Concepts I include in the term *real* are those that refer to teaching in the context of the current education landscape: high-poverty urban classrooms and current reforms such as Common Core State Standards, accountability, pay for performance, core competency-based teacher evaluations, and high stakes testing. Ayers (2010), Intrator and Kunzman (2006), Liston (2006), Michalec (2013), Noordhoff (2012), and Palmer (1998b, 2004, 2009) have described the gap between the ideal and the real through their own research and writing. Two examples follow. Parker Palmer (2004) describes what he calls the "tragic gap":

...A gap between the way things are and the way we know they might be. It is a gap that never has been and never will be closed. If we want to live nonviolent lives, we must learn to stand in the tragic gap, faithfully holding the tension between the reality and the possibility in hopes of being opened to a third way. (p. 175)

William Ayers (2010) adds:

On one side of the gap lies hard reality—too many kids, not enough time, too few resources, and, in many cases, a harsh and almost-obsessive focus on teaching as nothing above or beyond drill and skill. On the other side lies your own vision of teaching as a calling that can transform and empower, enlighten and awaken and energize all of your students. Working the gap means staying mindful of and

living within that excruciating contradiction and refusing to collapse it for the sake of comfort or convenience. (p. 138)

The solution Parker and Ayers, as well as others (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012; Korthagen, Noddings, 2013; Noordhoff, 2012), speak of is a productive tension between the two ways of looking at education. While it must include teachers who are technically skilled, effective, and *good* at what they do, education must be more holistic to include much more than teacher scores on a list of competencies and student scores on state assessments. Cutforth (1999) clarifies: “Teaching is a practice with immense moral significance that requires continuous philosophic and practical reflection” (p. 403). The picture needs to broaden rather than change completely. We need a both/and, not an either/or philosophy and practice of education to best serve students and the teachers who will teach them (Dewey 1938; Korthagen, 2004; Michalec, 2012; Noddings, 2013). Noordhoff (2012) asked directly, “How can we engage and develop the person in the profession at the same time we develop conceptual frameworks and technical skills?” (p. 64).

Within the framework of a pre-service teacher moving through teacher education to a job in the classroom, this study will focus on the perspectives of four faculty educators who prepare teachers in teacher education programs. These teacher educators are also facilitators in the Courage to Teach program, a personal and professional renewal program for educators within the Center for Courage and Renewal (<http://www.couragerenewal.org/courage-to-teach/>). Throughout this dissertation, the gap between the ideal and the real will take on different angles and flavors. It sometimes

appears in reference to what teachers would like to do in practice versus what they must do, what teacher educators are able to infuse into their teachings versus what must be left out, what priority is given to preparing pre-service teachers with needed technical skills versus what priority is given to reflection and self-care. There are many aspects and varying widths of the gap. This study will focus on the gap the four participants experience in their work and how it informs their practice in preparing new teachers.

### **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following central question:

Research Question: How do teacher education faculty influenced by Palmer's work experience the gap between the ideal and the real in the current educational landscape?

The following sub-questions explore the research question:

1. What are their beliefs and intentions regarding the gap?
2. How do their beliefs and intentions inform their practice in preparing pre-service teachers?

### **Study Significance**

This study is important for three reasons. First, the immediate group of participants and I will renew our personal and collective focus on navigating the gap in our daily practice, rendering us more reflective and effective. We will accomplish this renewal through heuristic inquiry, a qualitative research method in which the essence of a phenomenon is co-created by the researcher and participants because both share an intense experience of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Second, the study findings will add to the larger call for the importance of the teacher's heart and the development of

self-knowledge in teacher preparation. Third, teachers who continue in the classroom and live in the gap are there for the direct beneficiaries, students, who deserve our whole hearts in teaching them. The value of this research lies in the experience Palmer-influenced teacher educators have had navigating the gap and the extent to which they have been able to aid pre-service teachers in doing the same.

### **Definitions of Terms**

Fortunately, as will be discussed in later chapters, the language around the inner dimensions of teaching is not standardized in the way that the observable and measurable dimensions are. For that reason, clarification of how terms are used in this dissertation is listed here:

*Soul/role-* A primary concept for this study is the soul/role match, or the tie between one's purpose/calling/identity and work. Palmer (1998) has also referred to it as *inner life/inner terrain*. In exploring this arena, researcher Karen Noordhoff (2012) refers to it as “‘self and role’ in most contexts” (p. 55). Noordhoff teaches courses based on Palmer's work but understandably she makes this choice because her work is in “a public university and where church-state relations matter and because adults can carry negative experiences with religious institutions” (p. 55). Korthagen (2004) referred to the aspect as a mission, likening it to a personal calling, interconnectedness, and “deeply felt, personal values” (p. 85). Palmer addressed the “core of selfhood [carried] within” using the word *soul*:

Philosophers haggle about what to call the core of our humanity, but I am no stickler for precision. Thomas Merton called it true self. Buddhists call it original nature or big self. Quakers call it the inner teacher or inner light. Hasidic Jews

call it a spark of the divine. Humanists call it identity and integrity. In popular parlance, people often call it soul. (2004, p. 33)

*Spirit(uality)*- In this dissertation, use of the word *spirit* and its derivatives is completely **disconnected** from the word *religion* and any of its derivatives. *Spirit(uality)* refers to “the inner quality or nature of a person” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/spirit>), “the eternal human yearning to be connected to something larger than one’s own ego” (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010, p. 48), and “a broader, deeper vision that takes us beyond ourselves and gives us and our actions a sense of worth in the context of community” (Lantieri, 2001, p. 24).

*Inner work*- In this dissertation, *inner work* is used interchangeably with *self-study* and *reflection* (Korthagen, Kim, & Greene, 2013; Liston & Zeichner, 2011) and is inclusive of the terms identity and self-understanding (Kelchtermans, 2009).

*Authenticity or presence*- These terms are often tied to teaching as a vocation or calling. Intrator and Kunzman (2006) coined *vocational vitality* as the “capacity to be vital, present, and deeply connected to students” (p. 16). They connected vocational vitality to a “teacher’s capacity to teach well [which] is linked to a set of ineffable, hard-to-codify qualities that often become characterized as heart, passion, or connectedness [that] emerge from the inner or core landscape of a teacher’s life” (p. 16-17). Intrator and Kunzman considered the opposite of vitality to be *burnout*. Referring to burnout in the human service professions, Hargreaves (2011) specified it as “an emotional process of being overloaded and undervalued” (p. 20).

*Calling*- Hansen (1999) described calling as:

Other things being equal, a person with a sense of calling comes to inhabit the role of teacher more fully than does an individual who treats it only as a job...will be more likely to exert a broader and more dynamic intellectual and moral influence on students...As a calling teaching is a public service that also yields personal fulfillment to the person that provides the service. (pp. 95-96)

*Holistic education-* Miller (1999) defined holistic education as follows:

[It is] the art of cultivating meaningful relationships. It is a dialogue between teacher and student within a community of learners...it comes out of being authentic, of being who you are...Standardization, quantitative assessment, hierarchical authority, and the political control of curriculum and textbooks all contribute towards diminishing or destroying this type of learning. (p. 196)

In this dissertation, I define holistic education as a “both/and,” integrative education for teachers and students that incorporates the technical and the relational, the measurable and the personal.

*Pre-service teachers-* Individuals who have yet to begin their teaching careers and who are currently in teacher education programs (*TEPs*). Sometimes called teaching/teacher candidates, apprentice teachers, student teachers, or occasionally new teachers (though technically they have not yet begun teaching in a licensed position), they may have begun/completed student teaching in an internship with a mentor teacher.

### **Summary**

Teacher attrition, especially in the first few years of teaching is, as Linda Darling-Hammond (2011) remarks, “a long-standing problem... The hard part is *keeping* the teachers we prepare” (p. 19). One factor in new teacher attrition is the gap between what they thought the job would be, the ideal, and the reality of what it is. There is a shock that accompanies the reality of the classroom (Farkas, Johnson, Foleno, & Public Agenda Foundation, 2000) and for many it is too much to bear.

Faculty in teacher preparation programs, the teachers of teachers, are charged with a large development task. A few of the students they face come with intact teaching selves – they have a calling to do the work and are full of heart, passion, and a desire to learn the skills they will need. Many are unaware of the inner strength they will need to carry them through their first year let alone their careers. These faculty must prepare pre-service teachers with theory, pedagogy, reflective practices, and practical experience that will allow them to enter the field ready to greet their own groups of learners. The faculty know all about the gap between where their students are and where they are headed, particularly those headed for high-poverty contexts where attrition is higher than average.

This study will explore how professors who have been influenced by *Courage to Teach* and Parker Palmer experience the gap as teacher educators. It examines their beliefs and the extent to which their beliefs inform their practices in preparing pre-service teachers to face the gap. Because this group of educators has a shared experience and set of beliefs, their beliefs and practices are potentially more holistic and can help teachers retain more of their teaching self as they approach the reality of the work they are called to do.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

“One must *be* a teacher, not just act like one” (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 3).

### **Introduction**

This review of the literature will begin with the heart of the teacher, the “ideal” that pre-service teachers arrive in teacher education programs with including terms such as passion, calling, presence, core qualities, heart, the person in the profession, and identity. Next, I will discuss the “real” world of working in classrooms, including the reality of new teacher attrition, particularly in urban high-poverty settings. In the third section I will cover teacher education and views about what should be stressed in teacher education and in the classroom will be discussed as trends have waxed and waned. Fourth I will provide a brief review of the research on identity development. Finally, I will include a complete picture of Courage to Teach to provide understanding of the focus of the research and the participants of the study.

Most of the works included in this review are situated within the past ten years but the review of the literature was conducted without regard to year of publication as many important works reach back as far as Dewey’s 1938 writing about the either/or philosophy and gap between traditional and progressive schooling. Holistic teaching and learning as opposed to a competency-based focus surged in the 1960s and 1970s in the social justice era of education and tapered in the 1990s and 2000s with the arrival of standards and accountability. The holistic approach is gaining ground at speed now with



the mindfulness in schools movement as brain research is showing mindfulness practice in children positively affects social emotional and academic skills.

Whyte's 2001 text on identity in work is not specific to education, and the review was not strictly limited to education although the primary search terms were: teacher education/educators, teacher preparation, calling, vocation, presence, authenticity, heart of the teacher, inner life/terrain, professional identity, moral purpose, teacher attrition, urban context, teacher effectiveness, teacher performance evaluation/competencies, and standards/high-stakes testing. Some of the search terms led to research and writings in areas of other helping professions such as nursing and community activists, for example Ram Dass's 1985 book, *How Can I Help?* The threads of the ideas around the presence of self in the work reach far and wide, but what is included in these pages are those most relevant to teachers and teacher education. An additional parameter is traditional university-based teacher education programs; this review will not delve into professional development schools, hybrids, or alternative routes to teacher licensure.

### **The Ideal in Pre-Service Teaching Candidates**

The "person in the profession" is an idea echoed by Intrator and Kunzman (2006) and it speaks to the idea that teachers have a teaching self that permeates and adds meaning to the work: "Most teachers enter the profession with a vision of themselves as potent agents of change in the lives and learning of their students" (p. 20). This teaching self continually changes over the course of teacher education and a teacher's career, but doing work they love, helping others, and contributing to society have been found to be very important to young people who choose to be teachers (Farkas et al., 2000). Lortie found

these same “attractors to teaching” (p. 27) in his seminal work on the sociology of teachers in 1975.

Pre-service teachers come to teacher education programs typically lacking in specific technical teaching skills, but with “a set of ineffable, hard-to-codify qualities that often become characterized as heart, passion, or connectedness” (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006, p. 16), often referred to as “calling” (Day, 2004; Gu & Day, 2007; Hansen, 1999; Korthagen, 2004).

Korthagen (2004, p. 85) and Nieto (2005, p. 204) referred to Palmer’s “emotional, intellectual, and spiritual” (1998b, p. 5) aspects of the self as “core qualities”, particularly “mission” in making a difference. It is these “core qualities”, the “self that teaches”, and the “person in the profession” that constitute the ideal in teacher candidates.

### **The Real World of Teaching and New Teacher Attrition**

#### **Attrition**

Sometimes referred to as early leavers, close to one third of highly effective teachers left within two years and almost half left within five in a 2013 study of four large urban school systems conducted by The New Teacher Project (TNTP), a nonprofit teacher recruitment, certification, and hiring company. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) reported in its 2007 policy brief, “The High Cost of Teacher Turnover” the cost of teacher attrition at \$7 billion per year in just teacher recruitment and induction expenses. The brief also noted the most heartbreaking aspect of these figures: students in high-poverty schools get a series of new teachers who have

not had time to become good at teaching. In the 2003 report, “No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America’s Children”, NCTAF described this effect of attrition more vividly:

It is the lowest income students who suffer most. Young people need stability in their lives; when school staff come and go in a parade of changing faces, children’s emotional and social development suffer the consequences. (p. 14)

### **Reality in the Urban Classroom**

Liston, Whitcomb, and Borko (2006) aptly described the scenario of a first year teacher:

Every aspect of a teacher’s workload is time-consuming and cumulatively, it is exhausting... the uncertainty and complexity endemic to teaching often stir anxiety... Moments of disillusionment often punctuate the first year. Individuals choose teaching based on powerful visions, ideals, or beliefs about what teaching will be like and the role they will play in learners’ lives. These visions... are often not easily realized in many contemporary school settings. When the gap between vision and practice remains wide and appears insurmountable, despair sets in. (p. 354)

### **Non-school factors.**

The idealism, energy, and heart teachers bring to their first year in the classroom can be quickly diminished by factors in the high-needs context. Public Agenda, “a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization focusing exclusively on public policy issues” (Farkas & Johnson, 1996) reported teacher responses from focus groups in “Given the Circumstances: Teachers Talk About Public Education Today.” Although society often blames teachers and schools, the teachers’ evaluations of schools were quite high but they referred to other factors affecting teaching and learning such as a changing society. One teacher said, ‘All the problems of our communities have been thrown at the teacher... The school system isn’t broken. Society is broken’ (p. 12).

The source of the gap between the ideal and the real essentially lies in the nature of education's context. Preservice teachers are simply unaware that their calling to make a difference and their personal and professional identity as educators will be challenged by the context in which they serve and that context is larger and more complicated than they foresee. It includes the institutional structures of schools, the community, and the society as a whole. It quickly becomes an issue of biting off more than one can chew. Liston and Zeichner (1991) described the position of the new teacher thus:

It is simply impossible to isolate classroom life from the school's institutional dynamics, the ever-present tensions within the community, and the larger societal forces... it is as if the social realities of the world seep in under the door... many prospective teachers sense they must choose either an individualistic orientation that gives them a sense of autonomy and hope, or acquiesce in a sense of cynicism and despair that results from looking holistically at the constraining and 'determining' societal context. (p. 90-91)

Teachers are facing challenges such as "failing families, declining communities, inadequate resources, fractured school boards and top-heavy bureaucracies that soak up their resources" (Farkas & Johnson, 1996, p. 12). Children are suffering and the heart of the teacher is called to answer that suffering. Day (2000) wrote about the students who are in the classrooms of new teachers just beginning their work:

"They are more vulnerable, uncertain of their values, and, paradoxically, may lack motivation, self-esteem, and self-confidence in school-centered learning. They need teachers who understand them, who are able to provide a secure environment, who provide critical access to knowledge" (p. 103).

The issue is not that teachers do not care about the challenges of the high-needs context; it is that they feel responsible for meeting these challenges and are overwhelmed.

Working in an environment of strict accountability and a focus on standardized testing, they are forced to teach to an external, nationally prescribed set of standards. Hargreaves

and Fullan (2012) spoke to this shocking and overpowering amount of responsibility that comes at teachers from all sides as “limitless work”:

Teachers have been faced with mounting pressures, ever-rising expectations, and a widening array of responsibilities. Integrating special education students, working with ethnically and linguistically diverse populations, coping with growing amounts of ‘social work’ and emotional problems as support for families outside the school dwindles, and dealing with all the paperwork that results from testing, accountability, data-driven improvement, and bureaucratic regulations... teachers can easily get locked into spirals of overwork and guilt until burnout finally defeats them. (p. 109)

### **School factors.**

Pre-service teachers know they will be evaluated on their practice and how effectively they teach to the Common Core State Standards. Before beginning their first teaching job, they do not know how wide the gap is between what they think is good teaching and what the current landscape of standards and accountability considers good teaching. Starting out with heart, passion, and an ideal teacher-self identity, they experience a disconnect when the accountability measures are based strictly on external, observable behaviors. When their scores on those measures, particularly student outcomes on high stakes tests, are tied to their pay in pay for performance scenarios, new teachers feel that what they bring is not valued and much of what is valued is out of their control. The extent of the gap is illustrated by the following examples that criticize the either/or complete focus on achievement and accountability:

Achievement matters and so does evidence, but the relentlessly serious pursuit of increases...on standardized tests should never overshadow what gives teaching its mystery and majesty—what brings children joyfully into classrooms, what introduces them to interests that will absorb them for the rest of their lives, and what lifts them back up when their lives have taken a tumble. (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p.10)

Noddings (2013) distinguished accountability from professional responsibility:

Clearly, teachers should know their subject matter, plan their lessons, show up on time for classes, conduct themselves professionally, treat students with care, and cooperate with colleagues...Notice that this is very different from being held accountable for the outcome itself. Lawyers do not win all of their cases and doctors do not save all of their patients from death, but they are asked to explain what they did and why to the satisfaction of their professional peers. (pp. 7-8)

Paradoxically, the gap between what teacher candidates thought they could accomplish and what they face in reality in high-poverty contexts under accountability can lead to attrition of these teachers rather than inspiring them to increase their effectiveness. Day (2002) wrote,

The performativity agenda, coupled with the continuing monitoring of the efficiency with which teachers are expected to implement others' plans for the kind of curricula and approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment, has five consequences. They: threaten teachers' sense of agency, implicitly encourage teachers to comply uncritically (e.g. teach to the test), challenge teachers' substantive identity, reduce the amount time teachers have to connect with, care for, and attend to the needs of individual students, [and] diminish teachers' sense of motivation, efficacy, and job satisfaction. (p. 685-686)

In essence, attrition of new teachers who come to the work with heart, passion, and vision is occurring because they don't feel they are answering their call to make the world a better place because they aren't able to "teach right" (Santoro & Morehouse, 2011, p. 2675) when there is a mismatch between what they are called to do and what accountability measures insist they do. Hargreaves (2012) referred to Hochschild's (1983) concept of "emotional labor": having to manage feelings to meet the expectations of the job. In his 1998 study of teachers' emotional labor, Hargreaves found this could be "negative and debilitating when it had to serve other people's imposed purposes and

when there was no time to care for people properly... There was demoralization, literally loss of purpose [and] exodus from the profession” (pp. 21-22).

Day (2000) and Tickle (2001) suggested that defining teacher effectiveness through ever-expanding lists of standards and competencies is bringing critical questions to the fore: What kind of teachers do we want? What kind of education do we want?

### **Teacher Education: The Bridge**

Pre-service teachers being prepared in university settings are generally given practical tools and conceptual tools needed to do the work, as the call has been heard from pre-service teachers who want to know how to apply the theory they learn. They are taught to be reflective, to problem solve, and to be culturally responsive in their pedagogy.

Liston, Whitcomb, and Borko (2006) wrote, “We think teacher educators and schools of education can and should do more to prepare candidates for the vicissitudes of the beginning years” (p. 357). With respect to the gap between ideal and real, they specifically recommended:

We need to foreshadow, substantively examine, and reflect on the gap between schools’ realities and candidates’ hopes and aspirations (fed, in part, by teacher education faculty). Doing so may well help our candidates (and ourselves) understand the internal and external tensions of teaching. It may also help our candidates better plan for and problem solve ways to make meaningful incremental progress toward realizing their visions. (p. 356)

In a study of teacher candidates’ beliefs and concerns about teaching and the role of teachers, Haritos (2004) asserted:

Teacher education programs must provide self-awareness and reflection exercises that allow candidates to identify their teacher role beliefs and perceptions regarding challenges teachers face in the classroom and explain the reasoning behind such beliefs before the actual onset of education and fieldwork experiences. (p. 651)

Michalec (2013) noted, “In addition to technical expertise, 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers and teacher leaders need a steady supply of passion, heart, and inner resiliency to resist burnout and effectively respond to the curricular, societal, and institutional conditions of teaching” (p. 28).

One holistic teacher education program that has attempted to incorporate self-awareness and self-study to align calling with the reality of teaching is Korthagen’s Core Reflection approach. With roots in positive and clinical psychology, Core Reflection helps people bring their actions in line with their beliefs through focus on their inner strengths Korthagen calls “core qualities” (2004). A key understanding in Core Reflection is this strengths-based approach toward meeting inevitable challenges does not involve delving into a person’s psychological past. The core qualities are accessed and engaged to move toward what one identifies as the ideal, or what they would like the situation to look like. As in Circles of Trust, this approach can be used for professional or personal growth. For example if a teacher’s ideal is to have a calmer classroom, their own core quality of quiet strength can be a focus for moving toward that ideal rather than focusing on the classroom environment itself as a problem.

Korthagen uses an onion model to illustrate levels of change:



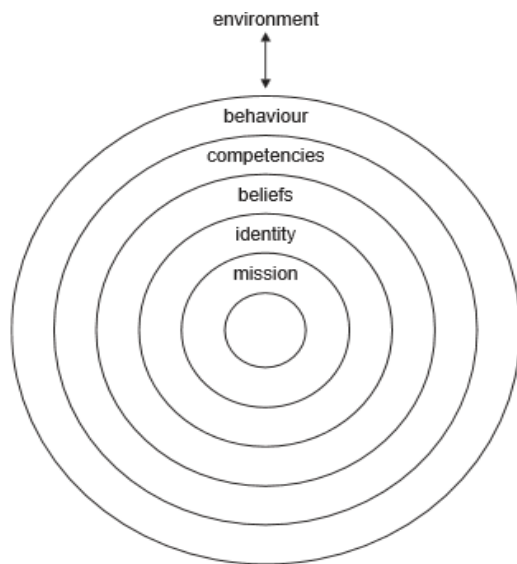


Figure 1. The onion model of change (Korthagen, Kim, & Greene, 2013).

The level of mission refers to a teacher's calling; the level of identity, the core of personality, and the kind of teacher a person wants to be. Like Palmer's inner and outer terrains and the gap between the ideal and the real, Korthagen's onion model shows inner and outer levels – the outermost level (environment) affects the inner levels, and the innermost levels (mission and identity) affect behavior and competencies levels.

Korthagen, Kim, and Greene (2013) described the application of the core reflection approach in teacher education at Southern Oregon University:

Through coaching with core reflection, [new teachers'] responses to those feelings and tensions became more grounded and less emotionally debilitating... By helping our beginning teachers strengthen their inner resources for addressing the inevitable obstacles they would encounter, core reflection provided a sustainable, long-term process for personal and professional development. (pp. 73-74)

Korthagen et al. (2013) discuss the ideal/real gap experienced by teachers and the use of Core Reflection and the onion model in handling that gap:

Our teachers entered their teaching jobs with high ideals only to have them dashed by the unexpected realities within their school settings, which created a sense of loss they described as ‘heartbreaking’... We gravitated toward the onion model as a way to describe the disequilibrium our new teachers felt when the ‘reality’ of their teaching environments, behaviors, and competencies didn’t match their ideals. (pp. 73-74)

Palmer (1998b) wondered, “How can the teacher’s selfhood become a legitimate topic in education and in our public dialogues on educational reform?” (p.3). He holds that self-knowledge through answering questions such as “How does the quality of my selfhood form the way I relate to my students?” is imperative for good teaching.

Korthagen et al. (2013) described the self, or the core qualities, as the most memorable thing about a teacher. That is, we remember our best (and worst) teachers more for who they are than for their technical skills. They further state the importance of these inner qualities in the teaching profession and note their “whole” (p. 17) nature, as in the example of caring. Unlike technical competencies like classroom management, it cannot be broken down into sub-competencies.

There are certainly challenges to developing selfhood and the person in the profession in teacher education. One common concern about teachers who bring self-knowledge and a holistic view of teaching and learning that includes the spirit to their practice is that they are violating the First Amendment. Proponents of holistic education note the ancient, secular way of educating through the mind, body, and spirit (Miller, 2000, 2005) and conceptions of spirit and soul as secular concepts (Lantieri, 2001; Orr, 2005).

Kessler (2000) clarified the separation of church and state issue in the following excerpt:

We do need to be careful. If we define spirituality in terms of beliefs that one group holds and others do not, we violate the first amendment by imposing such beliefs through curriculums in public schools... Listening to students for many

years, however, has shown me that young people have experiences that nourish their spiritual development and *yet are not directly related to worldview or religious dogma*. We *can* honor the First Amendment without abandoning our children's spiritual development. (p. xiv)

Kessler also acknowledged the risks that come with bringing spiritual and emotional self-knowledge and development into the work of teachers and students. She cautioned, "We risk unleashing a torrent of dammed-up emotions in students for whom the least invitation to authenticity provides an opening for genuine trauma or attention-seeking melodrama" (p. 162). She also mentioned those students who are too afraid or cynical to take part in the work and who disrupt the environment for others as well as teachers who may be inauthentic or overzealous in their approach, resulting in harm to students.

Hansen (2001) likewise addressed the potential for overzealous, ideal-driven teachers to become "blind to pedagogical realities" (p. 165). He pointed out, "Many new candidates enter their professional development programs fired by ideals, in many cases well before they have obtained a sense of reality of teaching in today's schools and classrooms" (p. 165). However, Hansen wrote about teacher testimony and the actual benefit of ideals: "Idealism and respect for reality reinforce one another... ideals prevent their sense of reality from unilaterally dampening their hope and vision" (p. 164).

While there is good reason and appeal in returning to the candidate's identity and mission, to their reasons for why they want to teach, being prepared for action is difficult to accomplish in teacher education because the complexity of the job and the experience needed to do it well are understood only in context. In a study with novice teachers in a preparation program using paradox to understand identity and integrity rather than

dividing self from role as seen in traditional programs, Noordhoff (2012) discovered this issue:

The youngest or least experienced did not offer any specific benefits of holding and living with paradoxes. Although they initially saw the idea of paradox or its emphasis as 'silly' or not very 'relevant' during their teacher preparation program, they all concluded by the end of their first year of teaching, in Sydney's words, 'Listen to what you're hearing. It may not seem as relevant as it is, but the more you jump into something that is a lot bigger than you can understand at the time, the more you start to understand.' (p. 59)

In most cases, the teaching and learning for pre-service teachers is as divided as it is for students in public schools. Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, and Bransford (2005) described "the relatively short period available for preparing teachers and the fact that not everything can be taught" (p. 359). Standards and accountability issues reside in higher education as they do in K-12 and little if any room is left for work that does not connect to a standard. CAEP (<http://www.caepnet.org>), the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation, incorporated NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) in 2013 and became accreditor of United States educator preparation programs. Regarding standards that potentially address the human relationships and the whole persons involved in teaching and learning, CAEP requires that teacher education programs include evidence of teacher dispositions, defined as: "professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development" ([http://caepsite.org/CAEPConf2012Temp/F\\_G/\(F-5\\_G-5\)AssessingProfessionalDispositions-DebraColley.pdf](http://caepsite.org/CAEPConf2012Temp/F_G/(F-5_G-5)AssessingProfessionalDispositions-DebraColley.pdf)).

What should be recognized is that in terms of assessing teacher candidates on these dispositions, the following list appears on the CAEP website:

- Based on mission
- Articulated as part of conceptual framework
- Determined by the unit and minimally include the ideal of fairness and the belief that all students can learn
- Assessed based on observable behavior in educational settings
- Systematically assessed – data used for continuous improvement (candidate, program, unit). [http://caepsite.org/CAEPConf2012Temp/F\\_G/\(F-5\\_G-5\)AssessingProfessionalDispositions-DebraColley.pdf](http://caepsite.org/CAEPConf2012Temp/F_G/(F-5_G-5)AssessingProfessionalDispositions-DebraColley.pdf)

CAEP's dispositions are "systematically assessed based on observable behaviors" of the teacher. Heart, self-knowledge, and connectedness are those characteristics of good, authentic teaching that we know when we see them, but are not data- or rubric-based and often not observable but rather felt. They are sometimes observed or felt in the environment and interactions with students and what they experience. They expand far beyond a unit. We know when students trust their teachers and feel respected by them by the way students respond to a teacher's presence. We can feel the heart-to-heart connection in a conversation between student and teacher about overcoming fear or struggle. We can see a student inspired to begin again when a teacher encourages them to grab the strength they know and believe is within them. It is what resides in the negative space, what is missing from teacher preparation, that is of importance.

What is missing, the characteristics of good teaching that will carry new teachers into the gap between the ideal and the real, is hinted at in this statement by CAEP:

Research has not empirically established a particular set of non-academic qualities that teachers should possess. There are numerous studies that list different characteristics, sometimes referring to similar characteristics by different labels. Furthermore, there does not seem to be a clear measure for these non-academic qualities, although a few of them have scales and other measures that have been developed. The CAEP Commission recognizes the ongoing development of this knowledge base and recommends that CAEP revise criteria as evidence emerges. The Commission recognizes the InTASC standards' set of dispositions as a promising area of research. <http://oldcaepnet.org/standards/standards/standard-3-candidate-quality-recruitment-and-selectivity/standard-3-rationale/>

The key words in this carefully-phrased paragraph are “empirically established” and “clear measure”. The “non-academic qualities that teachers should possess” are the relational qualities, the heart and selfhood the teacher brings to students. While there is acknowledgement of them here, waiting for scales and measures to be developed, for evidence to emerge, and for promising research is waiting for quantification of the ineffable. Educational policy remains fixed in a philosophy that is ill-fitted for the practice of teaching.

Developing whole teachers, keeping their hearts and calling intact as they explore their identity as educators is not without its risks and is currently not given a place in teacher education. Still, it is the both/and technical skill/inner development paradox we must realize for those entering the field. Brown (2002) asserted:

Faced with meeting the many needs and demands of ourselves and our students, finding time to nurture inner experience may seem like an impossible luxury. However...mindfulness of inner life emerges and, over time, carries over into skillful and intuitive teaching. (p. 5)

The identity of the teacher and the practice of self-knowledge the teacher brings to the classroom is what students see as a model. (Hansen, 2001; Kessler, 2000). We know from neuroscience that mindfulness and even just periods of rest and quiet benefit students' social emotional development, reduce stress, and improve attention and concentration (Lantieri, 2008; Weaver & Wilding, 2013). Teachers must be able to experience looking inward and observing themselves before they can pass the knowledge and skills on to students. Diamond (2010) underscored Palmer's notion that "we teach who we are" in the following remark: "A teacher's presence while he or she is in the classroom is the loudest lesson children hear. If we want children to be less stressed in school, if we want teachers to model responsible and caring behavior for our children, we must address and reduce teachers' stress levels" (p. 789).

### **Teacher Identity**

Teachers' professional identity has been studied extensively within the area of identity development. The three major perspectives of identity development are developmental, poststructuralist, and socio-cultural. Rodgers and Scott (2008) and Davey (2013) summarized four basic assumptions about identity that have emerged from the three major theoretical perspectives on identity development:

- (1) Identity forms in multiple contexts, including personal, social, political, historical
- (2) It is formed in relationships with others and it involves emotions
- (3) It evolves over time and it is not linear; it shifts and is unstable
- (4) It is storied; interpreted and constructed

Day (2002) summarized these assumptions in another way and stated that the inner aspects of identity development are the emotions and stories that factor in and the outer aspects are the contexts, political and cultural for example, and the relationships we have with others.

A few notable theorists representative of the three main perspectives who have been presented in teacher identity literature are discussed below.

Kegan, a developmental psychologist, proposed a developmental stage theory of identity in which he argued that people are best able to engage in self-reflection in the fourth stage of identity development. Of five stages, this fourth stage, “the self-authoring knower” (1982) has a clear sense of self and the self is defined internally rather than by external contexts and standards. This would indicate that students who are in teacher education programs are not yet ready to take part in the processes that generate self-knowledge.

The post-structuralist viewpoint emphasizes the relational, emotional aspects of identity development. Zembylas (2003) emphasizes the sociopolitical context of schools with respect to emotions and identity: “Teacher identity and emotion discourses are formed within specific school political arrangements, in relation to certain expectations and requirements, ones that presume a teacher should conform to particular emotional rules” (p. 226). Hargreaves’ “emotional geographies” (2001) – sociocultural, moral, professional, political, and physical – involve “the distance or closeness in interactions and relationships that [affect] emotions we experience about ourselves, our world, and each other” (p. 1061). In effect, emotions play a recursive role in identity development.



The socio-cultural perspective holds that identity is both situated within and determined in part by the contexts and experiences; that it is internal and external. Wenger's social construction theory stated that our identities form in communities of practice. This would indicate that teachers' identities form in part once they get into schools.

In addition to the three perspectives, Cook-Sather (2006) proposed the liminality aspect of identity development in that new teachers who have only experienced the classroom as student teachers and under the wing of a mentor teacher, were not yet teachers themselves. Therefore, their identity as a teacher is not yet developed when they begin the job.

As a final note on identity, Kelchtermans (2009) discarded the term "identity" altogether. He explained:

"I have purposefully avoided the notion of "identity" because of its association with a static essence, implicitly ignoring or denying its dynamic and biographical nature. Instead I have used the word '*self-understanding*'... [with] five components... self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception and future perspective. (p. 261)

Kelchtermans' "job motivation" component is most closely related to calling or mission in other theories.

### **CTT**

The selection of participants for this study was based upon their common experience as Courage to Teach members and facilitators. So that the context and background of the study can be understood, a review of Courage to Teach (abbreviated CTT or "Courage") and its theoretical and practical foundations is given below.

## **History of Courage to Teach**

Parker Palmer, an educational activist and writer, founded and developed Courage to Teach along with Rick and Marcy Jackson. Begun as the Center for Teacher Formation under the Fetzer Institute (a private philanthropic foundation that supports and partners with initiatives worldwide that connect inner spiritual development with outer service work (<http://www.fetzer.org>)), the first retreat weekend was piloted in 1993, and ten years later in 2003 the Center became a nonprofit apart from Fetzer. The retreat model is used to allow teachers to move into an environment that is free from distractions and conducive to inner work. Roughly 20-25 educators gather at a suitable site such as an outdoor education center, conference and retreat center, or university where there can be quiet contemplation. A Circle of Trust® is developed and this approach is described as follows by the Center for Courage and Renewal (2015):

The Circle of Trust® approach is distinguished by principles and practices intended to create a process of shared exploration—in retreats, programs and other settings—where people can find safe space to nurture personal and professional integrity and the courage to act on it. In the hands of a knowledgeable and skilled facilitator, this approach has the power to transform individuals, families, workplaces and communities.  
(<http://www.couragerenewal.org/approach/>)

The principles and practices of the Circle of Trust (Appendices A and B) are manifested in the Touchstones (Appendix C). Listed in brief, the Touchstones are:

- Give and receive welcome.
- Be present as fully as possible.
- What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand.
- Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.

- No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.
- Learn to respond to others with open, honest questions.
- When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.
- Attend to your own inner teacher.
- Trust and learn from the silence.
- Observe deep confidentiality.
- Know that it's possible...

<http://www.couragerenewal.org/wpccr/wp-content/uploads/touchstones-poster.pdf>

Typically at some point toward the middle of the retreat, within the Circle of Trust, groups form smaller circles called Clearness Committees, which are typically composed of four to six individuals in a separate private space. Parker Palmer (2015) describes the Clearness Committees this way: “The function of the Clearness Committee is not to give advice or “fix” people from the outside in but rather to help people remove the interference so that they can discover their own wisdom from the inside out”

[\(http://www.couragerenewal.org/clearnesscommittee/\)](http://www.couragerenewal.org/clearnesscommittee/).

Open and honest questions, a practice within the retreat, guide participants to ask questions to which they do not already know the answer so that they can stay away from fixing and advice-giving. This practice is countercultural and difficult to learn, especially for teachers who are by nature driven to help solve problems and teach people. An example of a question a person would typically ask of someone struggling with an issue might be, “Have you tried/thought about...?” which implies the advice “Try this/think about doing...”. An example of an open and honest question would be, “If this issue had

a color, what would it be?” or simply, “Where are you now?” The goal in the Courage work is to allow the inner teacher to emerge, to let the individual patiently and quietly listen to their own truth that they possess to solve their own problems. The principles and practices are so deeply contemplative that Palmer (2004) described “hold[ing] the soul of the focus person as if we were holding a small bird in the palms of our two hands” (p. 146).

People trained and mentored for two years facilitate the programs and must be solemnly dedicated to the work and able to carefully guide groups in work with the heart and the soul. After attending a Gateway retreat in which participants learn about and pursue the possibility of moving into facilitator preparation, they may be invited to begin the two-year process.

From its humble beginnings in Kalamazoo, Michigan “Courage to Teach became the premier program helping teachers connect soul with role, rekindling their passion for educating the whole student” (Center for Courage and Renewal, 2014). The Center for Teacher Formation, re-named in 2005 “the Center for Courage and Renewal” and based in Washington state, now works with people across professions with event locations across the United States, in Australia, Canada, and the UK. Its current tagline is “Reconnecting who you are with what you do”. Within the Center for Courage and Renewal, there is a range of programs under the umbrella of Courage in Schools. Courage to Teach, the original program designed by Palmer for developing the person in the profession, is one of these programs. Parker Palmer has authored seven books, three of which will be highlighted here: *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape*

*of a Teacher's Life* (1998), *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (2004), and *The Heart of Higher Education: A Call to Renewal* with Arthur Zajonc (2010).

Palmer's writings, developed from his experiences and wisdom, have given rise to the theoretical foundations of Courage work. These foundations serve to create a unique space for people to engage in the process of reconnecting identity and work. Some of the basic themes of Parker's work include the following terms and ideas: an inner landscape, identity and integrity, seasonal metaphors, paradox, a divided life, and the tragic gap. These themes will be discussed briefly to show the development of the Courage foundations.

**An inner landscape.** Most professional development for teachers along with initiatives for students to improve achievement particularly in high-needs schools are deficit-based and mandatory. Weaknesses and areas for growth are identified through data analysis that may or may not be accurate or understood. Courage to Teach is based on Palmer's premise that there is wisdom within the individual that has been forgotten or has yet to be discovered and that wisdom emerges in a space that is invitational.

The people who help us grow toward true self neither [judge] us to be deficient nor [try] to force us to change but [accept] us exactly as we are. Their [help] surrounds us with a charged force field that makes us want to grow from the inside out... (2004, p. 60)

Parker explains that while education focuses primarily on questions concerning *what* will be taught (curriculum) and *how* it will be taught (techniques and competencies), the question *why* is rarely asked (purpose) and in order for good teaching to occur we must have self-knowledge which asks *who* is the self that teaches? He wrote, "To chart that

[inner] landscape fully, three important paths must be taken – intellectual, emotional, and spiritual – and none can be ignored” (1998b, p. 5). Palmer’s idea of the inner teacher and the inner landscape is therefore countercultural to the field of education and how the development of teachers and teacher education is designed. He differentiates “spiritual” from “religious” in the Courage work, a crucial distinction in the separation of church and state for critics of holistic learning and spirituality in education:

As I explore ways to evoke the spirit in public education, I want neither to violate the separation of church and state... I reject the imposition of any form of religion in public education. Spiritual questions are the kind that we, and our students, ask every day of our lives as we yearn to connect with the largeness of life. (1998a, p. 1)

**Identity and integrity.** Two of Parker’s (1998b) noted descriptions of teaching are, “we teach who we are” (p. 1) and “good teaching cannot be reduce to technique: good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (p. 10). He explains in more detail as follows:

The connections made by teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts – meaning *heart* in its ancient sense, as a place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self... Small wonder, then, that teaching tugs at the heart, opens the heart, even breaks the heart – and the more one loves teaching, the more heartbreaking it can be. The courage to teach is the courage to keep one’s heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that teacher and students and subject can be woven into the fabric of community that learning, and living, require. (p. 12)

Palmer’s definition of identity is written mainly as all of the inner and outer forces that make us who we are. Integrity is simply wholeness, but wholeness including our weaknesses and shadows as well as our strengths and brilliance. An example Palmer wrote that best illustrates identity and integrity in the classroom context is the teacher facing the students, particularly on the first day of class. The teacher has many methods

and techniques at hand, but it is truly the self that we bring to that face-to-face meeting as we ask, Who am I in this place? Who are they? Who are we together?

**Seasonal metaphors.** Whyte (2001) wrote about the place of seasonal cycles in our universal development in the world:

Most traditional cultures have seen the hours of the days in the same way they have encountered the seasons of the year: not as clear lines drawn across our experience, but as an advancing quality, a presence, a visitation, and an emergence of something growing inside us as much as it is growing in the outer world. (p. 179)

Parker Palmer (1998a) described how this concept is exemplified in the retreats that operate as a series, meeting quarterly: “The retreats are named after the seasons not simply to designate their timing: Each retreat, under skillful facilitation, draws on the metaphor of the season in which it occurs, inviting teachers to examine the spiritual questions that are at the heart of that season” (p. 5). In winter, when all is dead or dormant, participants are asked to consider what could be dead in their work or life and what could be simply dormant, waiting to leap forth in abundance with the arrival of spring? The seasonal metaphor becomes a frame within which the work of that particular retreat occurs. This seasonal metaphor can be viewed more broadly as we consider our professional and personal lives and the overlap between them.

To facilitate and focus the inner work, “third things” are presented to the group as a way of addressing questions of the inner spirit metaphorically. These “third things” (Palmer, 2004), “poems, stories, works of art or pieces of music... represent neither the voice of the facilitator nor the voice of a participant... Rightly used, a third thing functions a bit like the old Rorschach ink blot test, evoking from us whatever the soul

wants us to attend to” (p. 93). Courage members are given a copy of this third thing (see example, Appendix D) and sitting in a silent circle are invited to make notes on the copy or in their provided journal. After a period of silence anyone may speak as they feel called to respond with thoughts or feelings that arise from interacting with the third thing.

**Paradox.** Like Dewey (1938) described, Palmer (1998b) recognizes the either/or opposite thinking that dominates education. He explains this in the following passage:

Either/or thinking has also given us a fragmented sense of reality that destroys the wholeness and wonder of life... In certain circumstances, truth is a paradoxical joining of apparent opposites and if we want to know that truth, we must learn to embrace those opposites as one. (p. 64-65)

We focus on binary terms like public versus private, teacher-centered versus learner-centered, girl versus boy and minority versus white test performance. Viewed more largely, Palmer notes the wholeness in the “joined paradox of thinking and feeling...the head and the heart” that is present in classrooms, teacher and student working together (p. 66). Parker (1998a) asserted: “We must embrace the fact that teaching and learning take the form of paradox: They require us to think ‘both/and’ instead of ‘either/or’... To teach as a whole person to the whole person is not to lose one’s professionalism as a teacher but to take it to a deeper level” (p. 4).

Palmer points to paradox in life as well as in teaching and learning and underscores them in Courage work. In retreats the space in which the work occurs is bounded by principles and practices but it is open for growth and learning. The work is done at the individual level but it is done with the support of the community with a focus on how the inner soul connects to the outer role. The seasons, as discussed, are also paradoxical.



Summer displays nature in full expanse but very soon begins its shortening of days and beginning of decline.

**A divided life.** Another of Parker Palmer's themes is that of "a hidden wholeness", the title of his 2004 text. Wholeness, he maintains, is not perfection but an acceptance of ourselves and even our brokenness as part of life. Within this concept are several ideas discussed above. We have an inner teacher and inner wisdom that are part of our integrity. Our identity is whole at birth and we learn as we grow to hide aspects of ourselves and our beliefs in fear of being ridiculed or chastised or to protect ourselves at work or from those who disagree with us. When we hide our true selves, our true identities from the outside world, what Parker (2004) described as "onstage performance" and "backstage reality" (p. 44), we become divided.

This gap between who we really are and who we present to the world can cause pain and emptiness or it can be so large that we do not even know it is there and we become our role. Parker (2004) described the scenario this way: "As we become obsessed with succeeding, or at least surviving, in that world, we lose touch with our souls and disappear into our roles... We sense that something is missing in our lives and search the world for it, not understanding that what is missing is us" (p. 15-16). Palmer wrote that we can sense a lack of integrity in others as well as in ourselves when we know our physician is not working with us in our treatment, when politicians are not speaking truth, and even children can tell when their teachers are not working with the head and the heart.

**The tragic gap.** The division and gap between our true selves and that we present to the world is one gap Palmer's Circles of Trust help to navigate through the principles and practices. Another gap he describes is the tragic gap in the world:

A gap between the way things are and the way we know they might be. It is a gap that never has been and never will be closed. If we want to live nonviolent lives, we must learn to stand in the tragic gap, faithfully holding the tension between reality and possibility in hopes of being opened to a third way. (2004, p. 175)

The tension Palmer refers to is the paradox in the tragic gap; if we collapse and give in to the way things are we become immobilized by cynicism and if we give in to the way we imagine things could be we join the ranks of daydreamers. Palmer's "third way", holding the tension, involves an acceptance of the gap and a way to remain productive in our work within it. He describes people who do this as having a "broken open heart" (2009): "Imagine that small, clenched fist of a heart 'broken open' into largeness of life, into greater capacity to hold one's own and the world's pain and joy" (p. 6). Palmer asserts that although difficult, if we can live in this third way, we can make change through a "life-giving contribution" (p. 9) because we will not be immobilized at one pole and we will be living as our true, whole selves.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

The goals of CTT and other programs under the umbrella of Courage work are to help people develop trusting relationships, the courage to act with integrity, and practices to sustain themselves in their lives and work. The primary theoretical foundations are found in the Circle of Trust approach. There are seven principles of the approach that underpin the Courage work:

- Everyone has an inner teacher and inner wisdom.

- Work on the self requires solitude but also community.
- The work is always done through invitation.
- The cycles in our lives resemble the cycle of the seasons.
- Our integrity comes from seeing ourselves as whole.
- A hidden wholeness is within us.

### **Practical Foundations**

The ways in which these principles are manifested are through the six practices of the approach:

- open spaces for sharing
- a commitment to not trying to save or fix others
- asking open and honest questions
- exploring the ways in which universal stories of human experience intersect with our own personal stories
- using multiple modes of reflection
- honoring confidentiality

### **Summary**

Christopher Day (2000) wrote, “Teaching involves a moral commitment to serve the interests of students and society. It involves knowledge, skills, and accountability, but it also involves ideals” (p. 113). This study considers the literature and past studies on the ideal in teaching – the moral purpose, heart, passion, and calling – and the reality teacher candidates will face upon entering the field. Teacher education programs can bridge the gap between the ideal and the real if they “recognise the importance of and provide for

the development of the personal dimensions of being a teacher” (Tickle, 2011, p. 54). There must be space throughout teacher preparation for the weaving of actual practice related to active reflection on the self who teaches, including one’s core qualities and calling that will truly sustain teachers when they face reality alone. Danielewicz (2001) wrote, “Viewing identity development as central, making selves the point in teacher education program, is a way of supporting and validating these aspiring teachers” (p. 6).

The purpose of this study is to explore with Courage to Teach-informed teacher educators the ways in which their beliefs about the gap inform their practice in preparing new teachers. Perhaps they are the start of slowing the exodus.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **Research Design and Assumptions**

Quantitative studies report on relationships among variables such as test scores and other data. Or they can derive data from questionnaires given to teachers or students. As we attempt to understand and explain the intricate human interactions in the context of the classroom, we must search more deeply than a single cause and effect. Qualitative research designs are common in education settings as researchers attempt to understand and describe complex interrelationships in teaching and learning. Qualitative research is intensive and interpretive, personal and constructivist (Stake, 1995). In studying teacher educators, a common qualitative approach has been self-study. “Self-Study of Teacher Education [S-STEP] Practices” is a Special Interest Group (SIG) at the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Intrator and Kunzman (2009), Dinkelman, Margolis, and Sikkenga (2006), and Wood and Borg (2010) have researched teacher educator beliefs and practices through self-study.

Qualitative research is appropriate when, as Creswell (2013) explains, “We need a *complex*, detailed understanding of the issue... established by talking directly with people... and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature” (p. 48). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) outline five phases of the research process beginning with the researcher and interpretive paradigms

(phases 1 and 2) followed by the research strategies, data collection and analysis, and interpretation and evaluation (phases 3, 4, and 5). In this manner, the researcher and his or her philosophical assumptions and frameworks are highlighted as the foundation from which research questions stem and how a study is ultimately designed and conducted.

Five philosophical assumptions are associated with the transformative framework under which this study was conducted (Creswell, 2013). Ontologically, the level of participation between the researcher and the individuals being studied (see “co-researchers”, below) resulted in an emergent “subjective-objective reality” (Creswell, 2013, p. 36). Each participant brought their own subjective, multiple experiences of reality to the research that were brought together in these findings. Epistemologically, I worked with the participants in an *emic* approach in developing the portraits that portrayed the phenomenon of the gap experience. In an *etic* frame of reference I analyzed the transcripts, portraits, and artifacts to discern themes. The *emic* and *etic* are very closely linked in this heuristic study in which there is a specific experience with specific associated language that the participants and I share. Methodologically, the collaborative processes inherent to heuristic design and the inductive nature of the findings applied to this research. Axiologically, the respect for the value of teachers and teacher educators as the providers of education is central to the study. As a teacher, I bring Garrison’s (1985) testimony to the forefront of the problem of attrition: “Teachers, male and female alike, share the sad consequences of a society foolish enough to care little for those who care so much” (p. 31).

My focus was on the use of a heuristic inquiry to explore how Courage to Teach facilitators, teacher education faculty influenced by Parker Palmer, experience the gap that exists between the ideal and the real in the current educational landscape and how they experience aligning their beliefs with their practices. I used interviewing as a method, specifically conceptual interviews as a “joint endeavor to uncover the essential nature of a phenomenon” (Kvale, 2007, pp. 71-72). Kvale evoked a “traveler metaphor” of the researcher conducting research interviews for knowledge production. He encapsulated his traveler metaphor as follows:

The traveler is on a journey to a distant country that leads to a tale to be told upon returning home. The interviewer-traveler wanders through the landscape and enters into conversations with the people he or she encounters... The journey may not only lead to new knowledge; the traveler might change as well. (pp. 19-20)

### **Heuristics**

Teaching from the heart is where I find flow, precisely as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). I do not notice the passage of time as I sense my true self and my “calling.” I am passionate about the work because it does not really feel like work; I feel connected and absorbed. I have experienced the “tragic gap” (Palmer, 2004) between the ideal and the real as I have yearned for more time for relationship building with students but felt pressured to teach content in a prescribed manner. I have also experienced the hope and resilience Courage to Teach work can bring to the call to teach. As a beginning teacher educator, I am uncertain and unsteady about how to help guide pre-service teachers into the reality of the field of teaching while preserving their passionate idealism. In researching the ways reflective faculty members/facilitators negotiate the gap between the ideal and the real, I am personally engaged in the

phenomenon, driven by the desire to understand the wisdom they share. In heuristic research, “the investigator must have had a direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated. There must have been actual autobiographical connections. The heuristic researcher has undergone the experience in a vital, intense, full way” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14). The connections and experiences I bring to the study and the passionate search for meaning through self-discovery and inner awareness about issues of the heart make heuristic inquiry the appropriate methodological fit for the research I conducted.

Moustakas established heuristic research processes beginning in 1961. He used the word *heuristic*, related to the Greek word *heuriskein*, which means “to discover” or “find.” He explained the role of the self in heuristic inquiry: “From the beginning and throughout an investigation, heuristic research involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration” (1990, p. 11). Heuristic research is a type of phenomenology. While both heuristic research and phenomenology describe the essence of the phenomenon being studied, the heuristic design, unlike phenomenology, preserves the essence of the person throughout the evolution of the study. Different from phenomenology, the researcher is not detached from the experiences that define the phenomenon or the relationships that contribute to it. The co-researchers are also honored through their personal frame of reference in creating the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). As Patton explained (2002) in the following passage:

There are two focusing or narrowing elements of heuristic inquiry within the larger framework of phenomenology. First, the researcher must have personal



experience [of the phenomenon being studied]. Second, others (co-researchers) who are part of the study must share an intensity of experience with the phenomenon. (p. 107)

### **Participants**

Although often referred to as co-researchers—in heuristic studies an assumption is that the knowledge and core of an experience is co-constructed—Moustakas (1990) used the terms co-researcher and research participant interchangeably. Additionally, Patton (2002) listed “principles of fully participatory and genuinely collaborative inquiry” (p. 185) to discern the level to which an individual took part in research. The list includes, but is not limited to, the following criteria:

- Participants in the process *own* the inquiry. They are involved authentically in making major focus and design decisions. They draw and apply conclusions.
- All aspects of the inquiry, from research focus to data analysis, are undertaken in ways that are understandable and meaningful to participants. (p. 185)

Understandably, these distinctions were made primarily due to increased sensitivity about research being done *with* groups and individuals rather than being done *to* them, but Patton’s criteria plainly delineate a fully collaborative scenario. The participants in the current study are researchers themselves who are fully aware of design and analysis issues. Because their involvement was limited to the co-creation of the phenomenon of the experience and did not involve design or analysis decisions, I will refer to them primarily as “participants”.

To obtain an in-depth understanding of how the gap between the ideal and the real in new teacher preparation is experienced, I use purposeful sampling because it provides for

information-rich case selection. In particular, this heuristic design purposefully applies “intensity sampling” (Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002), a form of criterion sampling in which participants are selected based upon their experience of a phenomenon. The participants are therefore experienced enough to be interested themselves in the phenomenon being studied.

Snowball sampling was used in conjunction with intensity sampling to begin identifying information-rich critical cases. I began with my dissertation advisor and Courage to Teach retreat series facilitator, Dr. Paul Michalec. Dr. Michalec is a teacher education professor, and as a key informant (Patton, 2002) he introduced me to teacher educators who are members of the Courage to Teach network of facilitators. I filtered the list of facilitators on the Courage website (<http://www.couragerenewal.org>) using “education,” which provided a list of 141 names. Using Google search terms “Courage to Teach meet your facilitator” and the name of the person on the list, I was able to find the retreat event each facilitated with a short bio and narrowed the list of 141 to teacher educators. I had a final list of 11 contacts who were involved specifically in university teacher education that I gave to Dr. Michalec. He sent my invitation to participate (Appendix E) via email on my behalf to the 11 on the list. The criteria used to select co-researchers for this study were that they: (a) had current or recent experience teaching pre-service teachers in a teacher education program (TEP) and (b) facilitated a Courage to Teach workshop or retreat series.

### **Research Questions**

The following research question guided this study through all phases and was born of “an inward clearing, and an intentional readiness and determination to discover a fundamental truth regarding the meaning and essence of [my] own experience and that of others” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 40).

Research Question: How do Parker Palmer-influenced teacher education faculty and Courage to Teach facilitators experience the gap between the ideal and the real in the current educational landscape?

The following sub-questions explore the research question:

1. What are their beliefs and intentions regarding the gap?
2. How do their beliefs and intentions inform their practice in preparing pre-service teachers?

### **Data Collection**

Interviews are the primary method for collecting data “to capture how [co-researchers] view their world, to learn *their* terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of *their* individual perceptions and experiences” (Patton, 2002, p. 348). Although Moustakas (1990) suggests the informal, conversational interview format, I chose to develop an interview guide (Appendix F) to allow for a more conversational approach while remaining systematic and comprehensive with each co-researcher (Patton, 2002). I developed the guide using Kvale’s (2007) “conceptual interviews in the form of a joint endeavor to uncover the essential nature of a phenomenon” (pp. 71-72) and interview quality. Other sources used in writing the guide were Seidman’s (2013) description of the “three interview series” (pp. 20-25) and Patton’s “question options”

(pp. 348-379). The questions in the interview guide were generated primarily using Moustakas's (1990) suggestions for heuristic inquiry and were designed to elicit participant experiences of the gap and how their beliefs and intentions inform their practice. In an effort to explore the essence of the participant experience, interview questions centered on beliefs, roles, emotions, and stories related to the gap.

I intended to conduct three sixty-to-ninety minute interviews with each participant, but as I explain later, I interviewed two co-researchers twice and two only one time. At each interview I used a digital audio recorder, taking notes throughout to capture non-verbal data, keywords, and my insights as the interviews progressed. I transcribed each interview verbatim. Each participant was given a Consent to Participate Form (Appendix G) to sign and a copy to retain. The interview process was facilitated by my common experience with the co-researchers as Courage to Teach participants. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) wrote:

At the heart of heuristics lies an emphasis on disclosing the self as way of facilitating disclosure from others — a response to the tacit dimension within oneself sparks a similar call from others. The heuristic scientist, in contact with others, places a high value on the depth and sensitivity of interchange...a communal flow from the depth of oneself to another self. (p. 50)

There was a unique, established openness that the participants and I brought to the interviews that led relatively easily to this depth of interchange. Palmer refers to this as “deep speaks to deep” (2004, p. 113). The interviews moved quickly and easily to “Reflection on Meaning,” questions (Seidman, 2013), due to the Courage to Teach community and its Circle of Trust culture of honest, open questions, honoring confidentiality, and appreciating paradox. There was not a need for the “Life History” or

“Details of Experience” questions as much so as there would be with a different group of participants.

Therefore, although I chose to use and remain dedicated to a carefully designed, comprehensive interview guide, the interviews became close, personal dialogues with the participants as we moved through a spirited and profound exploration of the questions. Seidman’s plea to “respect the structure” (2013, p. 23) of the three interview series went unheeded as we moved easily into the work of the study. I noted, however, Seidman’s caution that careful and open listening were needed to cope with the “paradox” and “complex tension” (p. 36) that followed from my close connection to the topic. I chose these individuals for their wisdom. I had to be careful in my heuristic steps to co-construct the knowledge.

I invited the participants to include personal and professional documents: logs, journals, diaries, artwork, syllabi, student handouts, Courage to Teach work, or other artifacts for analysis (Moustakas, 1990; Patton, 2002). Through triangulation the artifacts may demonstrate beliefs and intentions and how they may be matched with practice. Three of the four participants provided artifacts. One gave me a copy of her book; one gave me syllabi, student handouts and assignments, poems, and student work samples; and a third gave me syllabi, student handouts and assignments, student work samples, and some of her own writing, published and unpublished. These items in all instances and without exception helped elucidate their beliefs and how their beliefs moved directly into teaching practice. All of the participants gave me titles of numerous public works

including poetry and texts that inspired or influenced them personally and professionally. They were helpful as I followed up on the titles and authors.

A pilot study was conducted prior to the start of data collection to evaluate the interview guide, process, and steps in analysis. Two teacher educators who engage in Courage work were interviewed for one hour each, and the interviews were transcribed and analyzed. I must disclose that I wish I could have included them both in the findings but was unable to due to conflict of interest. They had rich insights that would have added much to this work. The pilot interviewees would have introduced an additional male voice to the sample – there is only one male represented in the actual study – and a relatively new teacher educator. The participants represented in the final study each had over ten years of experience. Participant demographics and data collection specifics are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1

*Participant Demographics and Data Collection*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Hours interviewed (number of interviews)</b>	<b>Artifacts provided</b>	<b>Teaching context</b>
Joseph	2.5 (2)	(references to personal books)	Research university (very high research activity)
Elizabeth	3.0 (2)	Syllabi, student work samples, poems, course handouts	Montessori  prep

Lois	5.0 (1)	Syllabi, student work samples, course handouts, personal writing, published chapter	Research university (high research activity)
Alex	1.5	Published book	(not research intensive)

## **Data Analysis**

### **Six Phases of Heuristic Research**

The six phases of heuristic research are: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis which is the development of the final project. These phases are explained in Douglass and Moustakas (1985) and Moustakas (1990). The data collection and analysis occurred during each of the stages of the study.

#### **Initial engagement.**

During initial engagement, “one encounters the self, one’s autobiography, and significant relationships within a social context” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). In my journey as an elementary school educator transitioning to a university classroom, I began to see

the larger role education plays in society, and a passionate, urgent concern grew in me to understand how to best serve students in my new role. As a result of my initial engagement, I was able to define the research questions that represent my critical interest.

### **Immersion.**

In the immersion phase, there is a solitude, a steeping, in which the researcher begins an exploration of the problem and associated questions. Immersion “enables the researcher to come to be on intimate terms with the question—to live it and grow in knowledge and understanding of it” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). Moustakas also writes, “The researcher is alert to all possibilities for meaning and enters into life with others wherever the theme is being expressed or talked about—in public settings, in social contexts, or in professional meetings” (p. 28). My experience allows me to pinpoint precise moments that illustrate immersion across each of these examples.

Before beginning to write the dissertation proposal I attended the Holistic Teaching and Learning Conference (<http://www.sou.edu/education/holistic/index.html>) at Southern Oregon University, meeting and interacting with dozens of like-minded scholars who prioritize holistic learning and the heart of teacher and student. I was hungry for information, energized by their work, very much “alert to all possibilities for meaning”. In my research journal, it is difficult to parse where initial engagement flowed into immersion, but what is evident is “the feeling of lostness and letting go... a kind of being wide open in surrender to the thing itself, a recognition that one must relinquish control and be tumbled about with the newness and drama of a searching focus that is taking over life” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 47).



Immersion occurs again after data are collected and continually thereafter throughout analysis. After the first co-researcher is interviewed and any accompanying artifacts are collected, the researcher is immersed in the data for that individual “until it is understood” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 51). After a period of rest (incubation), the researcher returns to the data and works with a paper copy of memos and codes for categories and themes (Seidman, 2103). This return to the data is discussed in the following passage:

When the above steps have been completed for one research participant, the investigator takes the same course of organization and analysis of the data for each of the other research participants until an individual depiction of each co-researcher’s experience of the phenomenon has been constructed. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 51).

While working through this dissertation, I was immersed in the data and the process. Characteristic of anyone doing dissertation work, I went to sleep thinking of the work and woke with it on my mind again – or still. I listened to the interviews repeatedly and I transcribed them verbatim (pauses, inflections, etc.) myself. As a longtime teacher, I know the importance of being intimate with the data. Having someone else grade student work will not give you the insight that you get from looking at it yourself and in this way the analysis of my research had already begun (Kvale, p. 2007, p. 95). While I read and re-read the paper copies of the transcriptions, hearing the voices of the participants in my head, I continued to go deeper into the meaning of the experience. I would get out, get away – my meditative activity of choice is running, and I would continue to be immersed in the questions and the nuances of developing significance. Still teaching in elementary school, I was immersed theoretically and practically in the field. I took the larger implications of teacher education, beliefs and practice, and courage and heart swirling in

my head to my work with the children more than I ever had before. My immersion continued to deepen as I attended the Mindfulness in Education Conference, adopted a yoga practice, and began to change my outlook in ways I will discuss here in later chapters.

### **Incubation.**

“The period of incubation allows the inner workings of the tacit dimension and intuition to continue to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside the immediate awareness” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). In the beginnings of my dissertation process, the immersion stage flowed into the incubation stage as I experienced a period of rest during which my intense focus subsided. Though I was not actively writing, ideas about my research were percolating and growing. In an early work on the steps of heuristic research, Douglass and Moustakas (1985) included a phase called Acquisition. They describe it as follows:

At some unspecified point, the heuristic scientist will have gained a clear sense of the direction in which the theme or question is moving and will know (tacitly) what is required to illuminate it. At that point, the time is right for the collection of data. (p. 48)

In my incubation phase, I felt this “clear sense” and “right time” when it seemed I had reached a point when I was ready to talk with co-researchers and collect data. I had read the literature for many months, spending long periods in the first three stages, and I felt a bit of a transition just before data collection. I had been nearly obsessive, pursuing information down all related rabbit holes. It was during proposal writing that I sensed an end to my first cycle through the first three phases and the beginning of my own research.

Through incubation (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985), tacit knowledge, which is “the inner essence of human understanding, what we know but can’t articulate” appears (Patton, 2002, p. 108). Rather than idleness, incubation is a state of quiet growth and the sprouting of new ideas. When the researcher’s focus is turned away, a gestalt emerges, as there is new awareness of the dimensions and integration of parts of the phenomenon. During data analysis, after immersion in the data collected from the co-researcher, the researcher moves into the incubation stage before returning to the raw data. This sequence of data collection, immersion, and incubation continues cyclically throughout, which is characteristic of qualitative data analysis. Creswell (2013) has named it a “data analysis spiral” (p. 183).

I experienced this incubation between data collection sessions with each participant. Moustakas (1990) emphasized the importance of spacing the work with each participant in these words: “When the steps have been completed for one research participant, the investigator undertakes the same course of organization and analysis of the data for each of the other research participants...” (p. 51). I moved continuously through immersion and incubation as I completed the steps for each participant, waiting for their review of the pieces I had sent them, working, resting, and continuing to think. Never was I idle; it was a constant spiral as Creswell described and I felt that each one of the participants was coming in and out of the spiral with me in turn. I kept a research journal where I recorded my questions, connections, and understandings.

### **Illumination.**

The next stage is illumination, another part of the data analysis cycle. During this middle phase, Moustakas (1990) explains there “may be an awakening to new constituents of the experience, thus adding new dimensions of knowledge. Or, the illumination may involve corrections of distorted understandings or disclosure of hidden meanings” (p. 29). Upon returning to the data after a period of incubation, I cycled through this stage as it “opens the door to a new awareness, a modification of an old understanding, a synthesis of fragmented knowledge or an altogether new discovery of something that has been present for some time yet beyond immediate awareness” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 30). The major pieces of the experience that were illuminated explicitly and tacitly were present but beyond my immediate awareness – they will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

Through member checking (Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Seidman, 2013; Stake, 1995) transcripts and portraits with participants, I was and still am in the illumination stage as understandings and patterns come to light. Member checking, as described by Stake (1995), allows for participants to “regularly provide critical observations and interpretations, sometimes making suggestions as to sources of data they also help triangulate the researcher’s observations and interpretations” (p. 115). Clearly a validation measure in qualitative research, in heuristic inquiry, member checking is integral to data analysis, particularly while moving into the explication phase. This is why Moustakas uses the term “co-researchers” (1990, p. 45).

### **Explication.**

In this phase of the research, the analysis culminates in a “comprehensive depiction of the core or dominant themes” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). Although the researcher moves into self-dialogue and self-searching in this phase to uncover new angles and layers and to refine understanding of the experiences, participants are part of the illumination and explication phases. As Moustakas explains: “The individual depiction may also be shared with the research participant for affirmation of its comprehensiveness and accuracy and for suggested deletions and additions” (p. 51).

Through explication, “the researcher explicates the major components of the phenomenon, in detail, and is now ready to put them together into a whole experience” (p. 31). Again, the researcher engages in the cycle of member checking, returning to the data, immersion, and incubation. The explication phase could be viewed as the beginning of the reporting of the experience of the phenomenon. Though it involves the characteristic cycling through of the other phases of the research, there is a unique aspect to this phase. “[Explication is] a prelude to the understanding that is derived from conversations and dialogues with others... the most significant concepts in explicating a phenomenon are focusing and indwelling” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). Moustakas described indwelling and focusing as “the concentrated, heavy work of heuristic research” (p. 24) and the key processes in understanding. Some phrases Moustakas used to describe these processes follow:

Indwelling [is a] process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of the nature or meaning of a quality or theme of human experience. It involves a willingness to gaze with unwavering attention and concentration into some facet of human experience in order to understand its constituent qualities and its wholeness. Indwelling is a painstaking, deliberate

process... Focusing is an inner attention, a staying with, a sustained process of systematically contacting the more central meanings of an experience. (p. 24-25)

### **Creative synthesis.**

In this final phase, the researcher fully internalizes all that has been encountered and a creative synthesis emerges. “The researcher in entering this process is thoroughly familiar with all the data in its major constituents, qualities, and themes and in the explication of the meanings and details of the experience as a whole” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31).

Through incubation, solitude, and meditation, tacit knowledge and intuition allow the essences of the phenomenon to come to the fore and merge with the researcher’s “knowledge, passion, and presence” (p. 52) so that a creative presentation arises.

Moustakas (1990) noted, “This [presentation] usually takes the form of a narrative depiction utilizing verbatim material and examples, but it may be expressed as a poem, story, drawing, painting, or by some other creative form” (p. 32).

Through the phases of the research, I experienced a synthesis similar to what is described above. It included a particular characteristic that Moustakas described: “meanings are inherent in a particular world view, an individual life, and the connections between self, other, and world” (p. 32). Moustakas notes, “The creative synthesis can only be achieved through tacit and intuitive powers” (p. 31). My experience and its implications are presented in Chapters Five and Six.

### **Data Analysis Strategies**

Though qualitative research involves a constant search for meaning and sense making during all parts of a study, data analysis involves concrete strategies to bring the data

together for focused effort on creating meaning in terms of themes. The methodological phases of heuristic inquiry also involve these specific data analysis steps.

After participants had agreed to participate, I sent them a consent form and the interview questions. My decision to send the questions ahead was twofold. First, due to my invitation to include artifacts I wanted the participants to have time to collect any related documents. Second, I wanted to give them time to reflect on the questions; there was no methodological reason to obtain “off the top of the head” answers. The never-ending nature of the work of educators meant I wanted to make our discussions worth their time. Prior to the interviews, I read work published by the participants.

During the interviews, which were digitally recorded, I wrote reflective notes about follow-up questions, participant gestures, potential themes, hunches, and the like. I noted points of emphasis where I agreed with the participant’s choice of words, new ways they had worded ideas, or well-known Courage language that continued to emerge. I relied on probing questions related to behaviors such as, “Can you give an(other) example?” to be sure to capture the second research sub-question regarding teaching practice. Since we had common understandings I felt comfortable checking relatively frequently with interpreting questions such as, “Would it be correct to say...?” As a novice researcher, I discovered that my questions could have been better designed and ordered, and I had to rely on holding onto and remembering what was said to relay it back when I felt the wording of the questions got a bit repetitive.

After the interviews, I listened to them immediately as I traveled home. I completed a Contact Summary Form (Miles and Huberman, 1994) (Appendix H) to record the date

and setting along with a summary, main issues that stood out, and remaining questions. In transcribing the interviews verbatim, I spent a minimum of five to six hours transcribing per hour of recording. I wrote memos that helped move data “to a conceptual level... developing key categories and showing their relationships, and building toward a more integrated understanding of events, processes, and interactions...” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 74). As mentioned above I intended to interview each participant three times. Due to travel distance (opposite coasts), I interviewed two of the participants twice and two of them once. In no way was the quality of the data compromised. In fact roughly the same amount of time was spent with each participant and the single session interviews, being uninterrupted, flowed much better.

After transcribing, I emailed the transcriptions to the participants for review. With their feedback and approval, I began moving from preparing and organizing the data to reducing it. Creswell (2013) refers to this as “winnowing” (p. 184) and Seidman (2013) calls it “reducing” as a means of narrowing the data to what is most important. During this process, it is important to keep the participants’ own words and to use first person (Moustakas, 1990; Seidman, 2013) to ensure the integrity of the data, that it came from the participants and not the researcher.

In first developing one participant’s depiction and portrait, I engaged in a within-case (single individual) analysis before moving on to a cross-case analysis. In moving from Moustakas’s individual depictions to synthetic portraits, Patton (2002) echoed the



importance of first focusing on one participant before looking for themes that are common across all cases:

The first task is to do a careful job independently writing up the separate cases. Once that is done, cross-case analysis can begin in search of patterns and themes that cut across individual experiences. The initial focus is on full understanding of individual cases before those unique cases are combined or aggregated thematically (p. 57).

In both within-case and cross-case stages, which occur in the illumination and explication phases of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990), member checking is required. Thus I created transcriptions, depictions, and portraits for each person prior to moving to the next person. Depictions were an intermediate step in creating the portraits so they were not sent, but each participant approved his or her portrait.

After the portraits were written and approved I continued content analysis, sifting descriptive patterns and categorical themes (Kvale, 2007; Patton, 2002). This was an inductive process wherein codes emerged “in vivo” (Creswell, 2013, p. 185) or were “prefigured” in the language of *Courage to Teach*. Table 2 shows these two groups:

Table 2

*Emergent and Pre-figured Codes*

<b>Emergent codes</b>	<b>Pre-figured codes</b>
community	creating safe space
“the good”	deep listening

“life-giving ways” & “death-dealing ways” (of living and working) “otherness”	reflection heart (in the profession)
“resonates” (with some people and not with others) “indoctrinate” (preservice teachers into particular philosophies) “diverse” (philosophies and experiences in the design of teacher education programs)	ideal & real tension in paradox professional dispositions in teaching spiritual (aspects of teaching)

---

### **Validity**

Creswell (2013) recommends researchers employ at least two of eight validation strategies. In this study I used member checking, triangulation, and rich, thick description. I used triangulation of sources in terms of documents or artifacts that may show an alignment or misalignment of participants’ beliefs and intentions with their practice. Patton (2002) noted:

Understanding inconsistencies in findings across different kinds of data can be illuminative and important. Finding such inconsistencies ought not be viewed as weakening the credibility of results, but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study. (p. 556)

Creswell (2013) asks about research: “Does the author convey the overall essence of the experience of the participants? Does the essence include a description of the experience and the context in which it occurred? Is the author reflexive throughout the study?”

According to Moustakas (1990) “the question of validity is one of meaning... This judgment is made by the primary researcher which is the only person in the investigation who has undergone the heuristic inquiry from the beginning” (p. 32). Moving toward an

idea of credibility rather than validity, Eliot Eisner (1991) discussed “an agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation and thematics of an educational situation are right” (p. 112). In his writing about credibility, Patton (2002) referred to creative syntheses specifically, asserting:

Artistic expressions of qualitative analysis strive to provide an experience with the findings where “truth” or “reality” is understood to have a *feeling dimension* that is every bit as important as the cognitive dimension. . . The audience feels as much as knows the truth of the presentation because of the essence it reveals. (p. 548)

I have attempted through creative synthesis to provide findings that lead to consensus that we can know because we can feel the truth. In a note to me after our interview sessions, Lois wrote, “I felt like my time with Eron Reed was my ‘retirement party’ . . . and the gift she gave me was listening. . . as I was in clearness committee with her. It was a very spiritual experience for me”. Elizabeth wrote, “I read the portrait and find it accurate and true to our discussions. I could imagine us sitting at the table engaged in heartfelt dialogue and it made me smile. It was an honor and a privilege to be in your presence”. And in her note, Alex wrote, “I am touched by your thoughtful portrait of our time together, and development of your thoughts and ideas as a result”.

### **Researcher Bias**

In heuristic methodology, to understand the essence of a phenomenon, the experiences and beliefs of the primary researcher are folded in with those of the co-researchers. Data from participants and the primary researcher, however, must be analyzed and understood individually, using the participants’ own words and writing in the first person. Although

more personal, “writing in the first-person, active voice communicates the inquirer’s self-aware role in the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 65).

The subjectivity inherent in the design of this project is something I was cognizant of in choosing this topic and these research questions. Peshkin (1998) writes, “I decided subjectivity can be virtuous for it is the basis of researchers’ making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected” (p. 18). In “taming the subjectivity [through] formal, systematic monitoring” (p. 20), I considered my “subjective I’s” (p. 18), or the aspects of my subjectivity that I bring to the study: the teacher-I, the child-I, the community servant-I, and the professor-I.

As a teacher in high-needs classrooms for thirteen years, I experience the real: the constant pressure of trying to meet school and district expectations for myself and my students while trying to retain my “selfhood” and humanity. My ideal priority of building relationships with students while educating them was emphasized in my preparation but it was not taught. I was never taught how to preserve myself or how to be resilient. Some of this ability came from challenging life experiences. In my fifth year teaching in a high-needs school, I participated in the Courage to Teach retreat series and my self-understanding and resilience were renewed personally and professionally in ways that have lasted through the present day. I am too close to the phenomenon of the gap experience to come to the research with any amount of objectivity. I have strong opinions and interests in creating and maintaining a productive balance between the technical skills needed for teaching and the heart and passion for the work that must be

kept afire. I have given my service to elementary school children for many years and now my endeavor is to contribute to the research on teacher preparation. My overarching interest is in the larger conversation about what pieces of holistic education can be merged with public education in high-poverty contexts to create an educational environment that is just right for kids.

### **Limitations**

The limitations in this study are inherent in qualitative designs and in heuristic methodology in particular. The participants selected for this study are a highly specific group selected to explore the essence of the phenomenon of experiencing the gap between the ideal and the real in the practice of teacher education. In studying such a narrowly defined group, the findings of this study will be potentially even less generalizable than with other qualitative designs.

The voices of students are not included in this work as the lens is turned to their teachers and the people who prepare them. Without exception the purpose of research in education should serve the ultimate goal of improving teaching and learning for students.

Finally, this research remains focused on the education of all children, but particularly those in high-poverty schools and how we best serve them and address the needs they bring to school. Definitions and classifications of race within high poverty schools are not parsed, nor are speakers of English distinguished from speakers of other languages. The level of connection or disconnection between a particular teacher's culture and/or socioeconomic status and that of his or her students is not discussed. Additionally, the argument regarding which teacher education programs are preferred or more effective –

traditional university programs or alternative, fast track programs – is not discussed here. The focus of the study is the person-to-person, teacher-student relationship in the classroom.

### **Summary**

How do TEP faculty navigate the gap between the ideal and the real in the current educational landscape, the reality that pre-service teachers will face in their career beginnings? As the primary researcher, I wanted to explore this question through a heuristic methodology with participants selected for their unique experience and interest. I collected information-rich data through in-depth interviews and relevant personal and professional artifacts. My research, including the collection and analysis of the data, followed the steps of heuristic inquiry: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, and explication. In sharing the findings of the research, I present a creative synthesis of the phenomenon of experiencing the gap between the ideal and the real.

## **Chapter Four: Presentation of Data**

### **Introduction**

The portraits presented here are the result of interviews that took place between December 2014 and May 2015. The participants engaged in a heuristic study with me to explore their beliefs about the gap between the ideal and the real in education and the ways in which their beliefs influence their teaching practice. They also shared artifacts including syllabi, student work, works that have inspired them, and their own writing. The four participants are teacher educators who are also Courage to Teach facilitators. Their names have been replaced with pseudonyms and any other identifying information has been removed or changed to allow them to remain anonymous.

These portraits are more than a compilation of the participants' answers to the questions I asked in the interviews. They are the result of our journey back through the Courage space together as we intensely, fully, and collaboratively examined the experience of the gap between ideal and real. The artifacts the participants provided deepened my understanding of their experience and demonstrated the ways in which they move their beliefs into practice. I am a teacher still working in the high-needs elementary school context and starting to reach into teacher education as a beginning practitioner. I am a member of the Courage community. The participants brought field experience as well as years of teacher education experience. They are facilitators of Courage retreats and groups. I believe we brought complementary viewpoints to the work because of our

relative positions. The heuristic design includes the researcher self throughout the research process and connects findings to their own experience and life. Thus the portraits include my reflections and feelings as we co-constructed meaning but the analysis in full does not appear until the next chapter.

The pseudonyms were carefully chosen for each participant based on my feeling of and for them. Joseph feels like an accessible and friendly saint to me. (When I told him his pseudonym he asked if I knew his confirmation name is Joseph – How could I?). Elizabeth reminded me of a dear woman I knew who not only resembled her physically but who was extraordinarily kind, well travelled, and calm. Lois was the name of an aunt of the participant whom she spoke of fondly and through her description I came to admire. Alex was again, a name I truly *felt* suited her. I cannot say why this was a fit, only that I felt it.

Though I thought I had arranged the questions in the interview protocol to explore the beliefs and intentions of the faculty and the ways in which those beliefs and intentions affect their teaching practice, as we talked further the information began to leak and pour out, flowing as a meandering stream. Information was coming at me in all manner of order and was woven together in ways I later had to unwind to see clearly. This threw me off as a novice researcher, but the conversations were so rich and were characteristic of Courage space that I simply listened and allowed the flow to continue.

### **Joseph**

I first met Joseph as a Courage retreat facilitator in 2005. In fact he was co-facilitator of the retreat series I was attending, so our introduction comes back to me clearly –



around 4:00 on a Friday afternoon in September. Upon meeting him I noticed his gentleness and his strength; it was emanating from him. His voice was not loud but it was deep. He pronounced his consonants in a way that was careful as if he wanted not to step on anything and that indicated to me a well-read fellow. When he smiled his eyes smiled deeply too. He was dressed casually at the mountain facility where school kids took “outdoor ed” overnight trips and where our retreats would be held seasonally over the next year. The late day sun lit the common room through the tall windows that looked out across the pines and I felt safe with this man although we had not yet begun the work for which we educators had all come together.

Meeting him nine years later as a teacher educator at his university office, Joseph again welcomed me into a space for us to talk closely and reflectively in the manner that is Courage: heart-speak, truly heart to heart, one to another. The surroundings this time though were different and he was different as well; this was a relatively spare office that I would call traditional academic- shelves of books, a file cabinet, a bit of artwork and a computer. Instead of shorts and Teva sandals, he met me in khakis and a plaid button-down. He offered me coffee or water. We had not come together in closeness for almost a decade; we had only seen one another in passing at a conference and I felt a bit of distance that seemed to be attributable to visiting him at his workplace. A serious and dedicated academic, well-published and respected in the field, there was a different feel to this meeting and I felt an initial resistance on his part that seemed mostly due to the physical location being different. I had to also recognize that I was meeting him as professor, not facilitator. He’d let his hair grow longer, his voice was the same, but I felt

less gentleness or openness and I truly felt him to be an academic lord whose works I had been reading. With time as we moved through the interview the closeness returned as we sat together in his office and the Courage quality of space returned to envelop us. In the second interview it happened almost immediately but I felt that if we had met off campus away from the office, there would have been a different, closer feel to the interviews on his part. It's as if I were asking him to mix identities in a space where a less familiar and more formal one was so clearly present and dominant. Particularly as the second interview progressed however, I felt very close to this man as I had during the weekend retreats over the seasons of the year we had spent in 2005-2006.

In his reconstruction of coming to Courage to Teach and Parker Palmer's work, Joseph recounted reading *The Courage to Teach* while on sabbatical. "That's a lovely text. It captures some of the tensions I was walking in and then as a result of that work I was able to attend a few Courage invitationals... and then started to get more involved in the Courage work." The feelings Joseph associated with these beginnings were "thankful" and "that I had found a home". I felt identical emotions and would describe the people as he did: "attentive, loving, caring." There is a homecoming feel to the retreats and the people who are involved in Courage feel much like relatives in their acceptance and instant familiarity. Joseph put it this way:

*I know I can go there and find people who will listen. And it's a particular kind of listening; it's a listening that doesn't always *frame* me in particular ways but tries to hear me and so it kinda goes right into the heart and I think of the Courage*

approach which is that attentiveness to other human beings and attentiveness when they're trying to find their way through the *morass*.

In recalling the experience, situations, and people of Courage retreats Joseph again named the very elements that were vivid in my memory. He described them differently though and he used a metaphor that not only gave me an “a-ha” but also served to illuminate some of his responses to questions I asked later. “The Circle of Trust work offered to me a distinctly *different* way of being in the world and a different *container* to offer others.” While I walked away from each retreat and the series overall feeling different in the world and different as a teacher in my classroom and work with students, I had not thought to name it as a “container” as it very much is. In particular, he explained it is “a kind of container that has certain elements and design features that help this process of what they call formation. And all this, you know, this stuff was new vocabulary, new ideas.” This resonated with me deeply as I realized the metaphor was apt and that the “container” was what made everything about Courage work: it was the common experience, ideas, and language that we had all learned and come through that allowed us to pick up where we left off whenever we met with other members. It is what creates the space that we have all experienced and are able to re-create and re-enter even when meeting together outside of a Circle of Trust or retreat. This container metaphor is actually used in reference to the Circle of Trust approach in resources about the Courage work but I had not heard it prior to this talk with Joseph.

Joseph did not want to answer my direct question about his beliefs and intentions. It would have been better worded as, “What are your beliefs and intentions *regarding*

*Courage to Teach* that you bring to your teaching?” Without this qualifier, he simply said, “That’s a big one, Eron... There’s a whole literature on teacher beliefs. I think a few handbooks have been written about teacher beliefs.” He answered globally about the act of teaching: “I love teaching, teaching’s fun...there are highs and lows”. So we moved forward. Throughout the conversation Joseph gave me multiple examples of his beliefs and intentions such that I likely did not need to ask the question at all. One is illustrated here:

I recognized in my university work that I had students come to my coursework and they— practicing teachers — they were beaten down... while I thought my course might be able to offer something to them I knew in my heart of hearts that it was limited in what I could offer and the *Courage* work offers something that was distinctly different and a richer venue.

My experience with CTT had occurred in this other “venue” as well. In my fifth year as a teacher, I received a mass email through the district that was an invitation to a retreat series offering an opportunity for renewal for teachers. This opportunity was not offered *by* the district but was communicated *through* it. It was not until Joseph mentioned this “distinctly different and richer venue” that I realized there was a certain set of wonderings and at times a level of trepidation we experienced around the spiritual that would permeate our conversations. Though we both know and have experienced *Courage* work as secular practice, spirituality/heart/soul work is clearly separated from academic, standards-based curriculum and instruction. Joseph said that what people consider to be in the spiritual arena “sometimes raises flags”, almost rendering ‘spiritual’

the “s word”. I firmly agreed with him on this and throughout our talks we understood one another when talking about “the ‘s’ word”. The spiritual nature of CTT can cause some people to feel hesitance around the practices. Both Joseph and I experienced this personally and he explains the resulting potential barrier to bringing the work into universities or K-12 schools. This is why I was introduced to CTT *through* my school district and not *by* the district. There is a point where public education will stop short of a merge with spiritual practices such as chimes, mindfulness, breathing, images, et cetera. Joseph shared this:

So then the question seems to me that one has to ask themselves is that so, if we’re dealing in a practice or an organization or an endeavor, or professional development that has a spiritual feel to it... is that in any way inimical to or in conflict with the prescription— so some people say— prescription against bringing religion into the public schools? Because some people say that [about] bringing meditation into the public schools because mediation has its roots in a contemplative tradition in the eastern part of the world and that those traditions also frequently also have religious tenets attached to them.

Joseph talked further about the CTT “container” being conducive to heart work, invitational, and sometimes difficult to transfer into educational settings. Open and honest questions are used in CTT practice, specifically in Circle of Trust. Joseph described the difficulty in direct application of these practices in settings outside CTT/CoT: “Sometimes open and honest questions could be asked and people look at you like you’re acting all crazy. ‘What are you doing? What kind of question is that?’” For

this reason, Joseph plainly said, “I won’t, I don’t, create Circles of Trust in my classroom in higher education. That’s not what we do, it’s not what I do.” In particular, there is a gap between the culture of inquiry at universities, especially research universities, and that of a Courage Circle of Trust. Joseph explained:

If I operate at this university with those heart expectations that are in the Courage work, it wouldn’t work. It wouldn’t work. A key part of the Courage work is that it’s invitational, and it’s invitational to a particular type of a way of being and the culture and the tradition and the norms at the university do not embody those practices so I can’t have them sign up for my classes and say, ‘Guess what? I’m inviting you to...’ That’s not invitational.

Joseph reiterated the beliefs he holds about bringing people together in spaces to hear each other and the practice of using third things. “The Courage world has enabled me to articulate more clearly that aspect of what it means to attend to, listen deeply to participants in the classroom. A lot of my practice in my classroom depends upon being able to hear and listen to students.” “Third things” as used in Courage work are often poems and Joseph quickly pointed out a level of discomfort with poetry but told me, “The texts I use in my courses – it’s not poetry – but they are either philosophical essays, or memoirs, or fiction that I use try to illuminate some of the dilemmas we find ourselves in in the education world. They trigger cognitive and emotional responses in readers.” In particular, Joseph clarified the works he uses as having “rich resonance in human experience [that] challenge me and my students to see the world in slightly different and new ways”.

When I asked about his definitions of the ideal and the real in teacher education, Joseph told me, “In order to be a teacher you have to desire, wish for those things that are a struggle to attain... that’s inherent in what teaching is about... it’s part of what Jim Garrison and others call Eros.” He pointed out to me that the gap between what teachers hope for and what they get is “part and parcel to teaching” and that it is an age old issue. He explained the divide between progressive and conservative traditions that has been present for 150 years and said, “We’re at a particular manifestation of that. Do I think it’s going to go away? No. Do I think progressive education has the solution? Or the ideal has the solution? No. Do I think the reality is always the devil in disguise? No.” Being a new researcher sitting in front of an established scholar who had published many works in the area of teacher education including the spirit of the teacher, I felt that he had just given me a spoonful of medicine to gulp and sit with. As a co-researcher Joseph had turned the lens so that the issue was framed historically. This helped me to view the ideal and the real as an ever-present dichotomy in the teaching life. Another spoonful Joseph served me was the definition of the ideal. Though I believe there is a consistent ideal present in pre-service teachers; the desire to do good, to serve and to care for the students along with teaching them content, Joseph pointed out the following about ideals in teacher education: “I think it’s very much class-based, gender-based, culturally prescribed as far as our understandings of what these good things are – these ideal beliefs about what we should be pursuing.”

The gap between the ideal and the real definitely exists for Joseph and it appears in different areas of his work. He noted the gap in being able to transport the principles and

practices of the Courage work, particularly the Circle of Trust, into education. He talked about the gap between the invitational nature of Courage work and the nature of K12 classrooms and university courses in which the work is not invitational. For research-based university faculty, he discussed another gap: “In my world, there’s a gap between the analytically and intellectually rigorous and the attentive and loving and caring. And so then the task in life has been to try to find ways, bridges, in those domains where it’s possible to embody both.” He spoke further about the both/and in terms of wholeness:

This sense of wholeness in academic life can be a very divided life and teaching can be a very divided life and institutional life can divide us in different ways and so this assertion and affirmation of wholeness of trying to find ways to take the razor edge of the intellect and combine it with the intuitions of the heart and the emotional realm I think are very rich gifts.

Joseph talked about the gap between the traditions of teacher education and that of schools as well. “School practice is more traditionally bound; teacher education is a little more progressively oriented.” When I asked Joseph about whether he believed the gap between the ideal and the real, between what is and what could be, is the “tragic gap” Parker Palmer refers to he answered:

Not always a tragic gap. What makes it a tragedy is that *it doesn’t seem to be resolvable*. It seems to be in our heart of hearts, a heartfelt sense. And that seems to me to be to be a paradox: How do you recognize the damage that is done by embracing that love at the same time you say no and I need to affirm and reaffirm that and I think all that is going to happen is that it’s going to get (slaps hands



together) stepped on again. That seems to me to be a tragic gap between the ideal and the real. If you approach teaching as work, oh well, that's the way it is. If you approach teaching as a profession, you find ways to manage that and deal with that. It seems to me that what the Courage work does and others do when you approach teaching as a vocation or something that is connected to who you are as a human being? Then when you can't do what it is that is essential to what you think is education and your calling or your vocation or your purpose, it strikes you, it goes to your heart. It doesn't just obstruct your pathway; it obstructs *you*. So identity is involved more fully in that sense. There are a group of us for whom it's connected to our calling. And for those I think it's more fraught...[Then you look for opportunities for renewal] or you get the hell out.

Joseph sees the gap as Parker Palmer sees it – as a paradox we dwell in as educators. We live the tension of the gap that is inherent in the teaching life. For those of us who are called to teach, the tension of the gap sometimes becomes too tight.

Joseph was a bit avoidant when I asked about how he believes students perceive his teaching, but he offered this: “I mean I get good [evaluations]. It depends on the year, it depends upon the group of students but for the most part I think they see that I invite them in to have meaningful conversations.” More telling was his response when I asked about his purpose as a professor in teacher education. He told me it varies and began by giving the details of his university work in terms of courses he teaches, undergraduate versus graduate student needs, and whether or not they have teaching experience. Later in our talk he shared, “What I'm trying to do and be in the classroom is a person who is

analytically and intellectually rigorous and attentive and loving and caring. I try to be that teacher, that person.”

His both/and philosophy and practice resounded as we talked about his thoughts around an ideal teacher education program. Joseph noted that like other “wisdom based approaches to life” CTT emphasizes connecting with the inner voice, the inner teacher, wholeness, and paradox. He believes teacher education should include exposure to different approaches:

School practice is a little more traditionally bound; teacher education is a little more progressively oriented. It seems to me that it would be a lovely world if we could have teacher education programs, and we’re beginning to see some, that have greater variety. I think it’s important to give them a taste of lots of different points of view and they sign up because they say, ‘I wanna be that kind of teacher when I get out.’

### **Elizabeth**

Meeting Elizabeth at her office on a winter afternoon, I found her petite self wrapped in an oatmeal-colored sweater and a long scarf. Her eyes crinkled as she smiled and welcomed me into her workplace. I stepped through the sunny atrium and into the front office area. Elizabeth offered me tea and she steeped her own in a large mug. She told me she also had coffee if I wanted it but I declined as we went to sit down at a round wooden table in her office. There was a lamp on the table and with the wooden chairs I felt as though I were sitting in someone’s living room for a visit. Upon entering Elizabeth’s personal space and beginning to talk with her, I felt an immediate sense of

comfort and almost kinship. She was the first “Courage person” I had met outside of my own Courage experience. I had attended a Courage alumni weekend with people outside of my group, but we had come together for a known experience. Meeting Elizabeth I felt the common understanding and experience between us right away as we came together for the interviews. Throughout our talks together I felt warmth, excitement, and a gentleness that came from Elizabeth’s self-proclaimed “back story” and “path” through contemplative philosophy, radical hospitality, exposure to many disciplines, belief and experience in Montessori education, dissertation work and other life experiences that led her to the place of wisdom she resides in today.

Reconstructing her arrival at Courage to Teach and Parker Palmer, Elizabeth mentioned a “back story”, a “story before the story” but did not elaborate. She said “I really believe that there’s already some of that within us and then an incident will spark that, because if I had nothing to connect it might not have ever happened.” As she began to tell me of her first contact with the Courage to Teach book, I noted this “back story” idea. Is there a calling to reflective practice as there is a calling to teach? Is there something in our life stories that calls us to this work? Elizabeth told me she heard about the book through a friend. “I immediately went to the book store, purchased the book, went home, and could not put it down... I resonated so deeply with what he was saying that I wanted to find out more.” Elizabeth attended a Kirkridge retreat and an invitational Gateway retreat for people who wanted to become facilitators of the work. She recalled her feelings then:

This was my path! This was it! It resonated so deeply with who I was and who I am and also my whole life's work. I met many wonderful people. I was so deeply moved by the environment of the seasons, the hospitality and welcoming but also of the group and the whole process.

In asking her to name the most vivid situations, experiences, and people and the accompanying feelings, Elizabeth told me about some of the defining features of Courage work:

The touchstones, or boundary markers, to me represent the qualities of the space that we want to design to allow an individual to do that work, our own work, but also to build a safe space for the community. The other thing that's really important to me is the paradox, the both/and that then leads of course to the tension that we're holding throughout life. I believe that it's cross-cultural because it speaks to human beings and how we grow and develop and learn and experience life. We all have that inner teacher, which is key to the Courage work. First of all, I feel safe. Well there's a whole mix of emotions. I feel gratitude for encountering them and finding a way that can be supportive of me throughout life and offer supportive ways for other people. But, in that journey, are all of the human emotions, I remember in journaling; just sobbing and I remember supreme peace and calm. And I remember anger at things I couldn't do. It's big enough and expansive enough to hold all our emotions— the ones that we don't even know are there can come up.

My experience as a participant in the retreats was identical to Elizabeth's. I recall different important aspects that define the quality of space, but my feelings mirror hers exactly: I felt (and still feel) safety and gratitude for the support. I felt (and still feel) anger for all the work there is to do that is out of my reach. I felt (and still feel) surprise at the level of peace and calm I experienced at the retreats and the other emotions that arose that I did not expect, even at a gathering aimed at renewal.

When we met for the second interview, Elizabeth brought stacks of materials including syllabi, course outlines, poems, descriptions and rubrics for specific activities, and even examples of student work compilations ("Words of Wisdom") that aligned with the principles and practices of Courage work. As she explained these courses and how she built them it was clear for me to actually see (and touch) ways that the Courage ideas were alive in her work with preservice teachers.

I was wondering what I would do and my idea was that the students needed a microcosm of that safe space of being in a Courage circle and I just knew that it must be invitational. In the course descriptions I include words like "individual reflection and study, experience and community dialogue" so that the students know what type of course they are signing up for. It is the question I was holding when I really came here is how to share it. So I go in and I ring the chime and I say let me do this poem and I ask them to read it silently. Which— let me just tell you— what I said being vulnerable? I have to learn to be vulnerable because nobody expects this— they didn't sign up for "Courage Montessori". So I had them read it silently and then I will ask them either would one person volunteer to

read it out loud or in many voices and then they read it. And then I say, “Is there a way that a part of this, a line or something resonates with you?” and we’re silent until someone speaks, and someone speaks basically to the circle. It couldn’t happen without the ritual and the safe space built up but people trusted in a way that like in the Courage circle they hold each other, it’s more than the one.

Other ways I share the work are deep listening. I’m not going to try to fix them, save them, you know all of that, but I will walk the journey with them. I offer radical hospitality and a prepared environment. This is intentionally a welcoming place— it’s aesthetics; it’s the people, nature, the light, it’s all parts of it. In my classes I have students do a letter writing activity with a partner about a text and they respond to one another that is very much like the deep listening in Courage work. In Courage it’s other people in the circle and here in the class it’s other students. I’m not saying I deliberately hid it, but it’s not upfront that this is Courage and each instructor could design [the course] the way they wanted to as long as we met certain criteria. Because what you say in the letter to your partner, no one is telling you what to say, I’m just giving boundaries and prompts like “What spoke to you?” Because the principles of Courage work are universal... that’s why I think people can come to it from so many different angles because we recognize ourselves in it whether you’re a nurse or a lawyer.

I have students do a self-assessment/reflection that I turn into “Words of Wisdom”. I share this with the members of the class so that everyone can see the great learning that has taken place because I get to see that but ordinarily the

students in the class do not. I have had students do a collage to demonstrate their understanding in ways they might not be able to show in a paper. I have had them create a personal logo and keep a field notebook because in the process of learning the necessary content we first and always need to consider our perspective and where we are coming from. I think of these experiences and I ask myself do they really embody the touchstones? I never left the intellect behind but I always included the heart. For example, there are certain theorists that resonate more deeply with you than others so my questions were structured in ways to tie together the personal with the universal. Sometimes I think we shortchange our students by thinking all they learn is the content. And the content is important, but how does that fit into the context of learning and living? And where they came from and what did they take away? Because whatever number of students are in the class, each one is going to walk away with something different. We know that but we don't acknowledge that.

Elizabeth made the connection several times throughout the interviews to a universality of the concepts CTT promotes such as the inner teacher, reflection on meaning, the prepared environment, and mystery of life:

As you probably know and maybe even experience there are many things that are similar to the Courage work. There's circle work, there's work with the talking stick, I mean I can't name all of the different organizations that do work like this but to me the touchstones, the paradox, and the whole list of principles and

practices of the Courage work are its signature. They dovetail with Montessori education.

Elizabeth gathered her thoughts before giving a clearly defined answer to my question about the beliefs and intentions she brings to her teaching.

I believe the people that are standing before me or sitting are the ones that need to be there. Everyone belongs. And I'm not to be anywhere else. I'm to be right there. The other belief I have is that everyone within the group is going to make a contribution and we don't know from the beginning what it will be. It will reveal itself with time and patience and in a safe space. Another belief is that the more people feel worthy and feel that they belong the more that they will contribute to the group and thus to humanity. I think my intentions are try to prepare myself and the environment so that those beliefs can be made manifest. I really believe that as Montessori says it's the use of the hand and we learn by doing and it's the body.

It really is countercultural— it's not something that you learn in teacher education. Once we recognize the significance of it for ourselves, the way I always say is “I can't turn my face from it.” So whatever setting I find myself in, I find myself doing that. And I think here in the US there aren't many *places or spaces* where we can do this kind of self-examination, going deep within. This is asking us to slow down and be vulnerable and ask questions. I think what you see from the things I gave you, the “words of wisdom” and the reflection back is that... this is important to people. It's not *me*, it's not me, it's the environment



that allows them to bring more of their whole self to their work and their work in the world. So these kind of spaces with the Courage to Teach and the Courage to Live, those touchstones, it's a real *privilege* to have encountered that way of living and being and for me, it's hard to turn my face. And it's essential, I think, if you're gonna be in a profession where your success depends on relationships. I'm not saying giving up standards... but it's also how we react to each and every student. I feel joy and gratitude and a sense of wonder. I feel at peace in a certain way. And alive is another word.

What Elizabeth referred to as an inability to turn her face from the work in terms of sharing the "way of living", I have called my "obligation". We talked a bit about the word I use and she did not feel the same word applied, but as I searched, no other would fit. I truly feel obligated to share what I have learned, to pass on to other teachers the power of slowing down, of going back to the calling, of reflecting on our heart and how it is surviving the work. Elizabeth preferred to call it "paying it forward" rather than an obligation to share with others. Related to this, I asked how she would describe her purpose as a professor in teacher education.

My purpose is to serve others on their journey of being teachers, assisting at the deepest level with their spiritual development. I think part of my work in the world *is* designing spaces where people can feel safe and find out more about who they are and do their work in the world with different vehicles. Identity and integrity, Parker talks about that all the time. It was only looking back through the Courage work that I found that that purpose was the thread that connected

everything. There were different vehicles but that's what I was doing the whole time and that was my real work in the world. I could not, I didn't name that and even though I was doing it a lot, early on, I couldn't have named it.

My role in fostering the development of teachers means I got to understand at a deep level how teachers are *very different* and there's a great continuum of excellence. Not all teachers need to be like I am. And it doesn't fit their personality. In fact, some of the teachers, thinking back on my own past, that weren't anything like this but yet really did something for me, I mean there were some who were, but we don't all have to be alike. And I think the part about being reflective and vulnerable and listening to each other, some people... aren't comfortable with that.

When Elizabeth mentioned this "continuum of excellence" I was able to think of several dedicated and influential teachers who were in fact quite uncomfortable with reflective activities as indicated by their responses to related professional development offerings. These teachers were memorable as my own guides or as colleagues and as Elizabeth pointed out they were different but talented. When we were reviewing all of the artifacts she brought that illustrated how the principles and practices of CTT and her beliefs and intentions match her practice, I reiterated how helpful it was to see the actual steps she planned to help others on their journey of being teachers. Elizabeth was reminded then of a bumper sticker she had seen, the gist of which she said was, "Peace within is how we have global peace". This was another reference to the individual work within the community.

Describing her conceptions of the ideal and the real, Elizabeth clarified for me that I was thinking differently about these concepts than she. She said, “I know you’re looking for a dichotomy, but for me it is different.” She explained her conceptualization this way:

For me they overlap. I think sometimes what we think is ideal, we need the balance, we need some accountability, we need some checkpoints: How are we doing? What I think now, as you’re calling the real, it’s not mal intent, but I think it comes from narrowness of belief about really what is education for all. What’s becoming with the reality is that we’re so narrow in our understanding and thus the implementation of education and it’s happening to teachers, school districts, parents, children. So it’s everybody operating in a culture of fear, and so where’s the room for the joy? I believe in those principles of the ideal – again like Courage – it’s individual work within a community. There’s something to me that’s ideal that follow[s] deep respect for the growth and contribution of each individual to the good of all. And the... environments, prepared environments, are based upon the developmental needs of children. And the different roots to get to the answers. Also respecting the unknown and the mystery of life and different cultures. Another part of the ideal I say is Montessori because it’s worldwide. Like I said with Courage work it’s based on humanity. There’s something to me that’s ideal that follow deep respect for the growth and contribution of each individual to the good of all.

Elizabeth told me how she sees the gap between the ideal and the real being part of life. She gave a simple example of people wanting to train for a triathlon, breaking their leg, and losing the goal (the ideal). She emphasized the gap as part of human experience but also explained it in her view of education:

I think that there's always going to be that tragic gap no matter what or where.

It's just part of being human, who we are. As I said it's universal, there's always that. Teaching is about experiences and relationships and, and content and knowledge, I'm not leaving that out, but the more we take that big chunk of teaching and make it more technical the more we are going to lose teachers and students. And it's only by slowing down and saying "stop", because if we just keep on at that same pace we'll either stop doing the teaching because... it's got to *feed* us because it's a very, very difficult job and if we don't get some kind of [sigh] acknowledgement that we're doing makes a difference we might stop or we might show up physically but we won't really be there.

I thought of the two most likely outcomes of the effect of the gap on teachers that she mentioned here: leaving the profession, or continuing as a resigned and broken servant.

In an ideal teacher education program, Elizabeth would advocate for the following:

In teacher education, students should observe different people who are different in methods than what they've experienced. I think in teacher education we do them a service by exposing them to different kinds of environments. We don't need to indoctrinate people but we need to expose them to different ways to grow as a person and as a community and then they'll take those things back. But

I think we are missing that group that's just not fitting in with their context or their biography. It is a myth that a teacher is a teacher is a teacher to all children, that you should be as good in the neighborhood school as you are in the public school downtown. I don't believe that to be true. Teacher education programs must be aware of this deeper part of our calling. It would be valuable to have students observe different teaching scenarios like the work before the work— finding out more about who you are and different ways of teaching. Courage work helps us become more aware of the idea that the role and soul are matching. I want students to truly find what makes their heart sing. I want them to take care of themselves and not sacrifice the joy in it because that's what leads to excellent teaching. It's a difficult job and if it's not a fit, turn left. We need you to do something else.

And I think the Courage work, by experiencing it myself, that's where I can then design and pass on to the students that I'm with. But without it, I don't know that I would have the.... wisdom or vulnerability or the knowledge to do it because I think we can only pass on what we have experienced or know. And that in turn is what the teachers will pass on to their students, if we're working with them. If the teachers themselves have never experienced what it means to question their own values or to hold two things simultaneously or to really grieve over past separations, or whatever it is, then how are they going to honor that in their students?

**Lois**

Lois graciously picked me up at the airport when I flew out to the east coast for our interview. It was winter and she stood waiting for me wearing glasses and a long puffy coat. She treated me to lunch at a restaurant overlooking a beautiful but cold harbor. We were grateful and happy to meet one another and talk about Courage, and as she drove me around the campus where she teaches we were hysterical in discovering that we were both from rural Cincinnati. We laughed as we shared memories and stories about the area, our families, and teaching school before we even began to discuss Courage.

Our talks were long and deep, personal and sweet. We explored the interview questions together as two friends on a quest as we sat together in my hotel room holding Styrofoam coffee cups from the lobby, our long coats thrown across the bed. Lois brought artifacts from her teaching – syllabi, a book chapter she wrote, and student work that we pored over on the cushioned ottoman between us. We talked through the afternoon and evening and then again the next morning before Lois drove me back to the airport. We discussed the research questions and more, continuing to talk on the way to airport. Both of us felt that we had created our own retreat experience and we were so thankful for our time that we knew and assured each other that we would meet again.

Lois asked me about how I came to Courage work and we talked about that over lunch. In her own reconstruction, she explained a slightly unusual path in that she attended many retreats and Circle of Trust gatherings before moving into a facilitator position. She told me that she just kept attending them.

As I read and prepared to work with a class studying Parker Palmer's *Courage to Teach*, I saw in the back of the book I could contact [teacherformation.org](http://teacherformation.org) because

that was the name before it was the Center for Courage and Renewal. I had to find out about me, my own identity, how was I interacting with it. I thought, ‘If I’m gonna teach this, I have to be able to get it from my heart’. So then I contacted them and I went to my first retreat and I knew at that moment when I was in that retreat that I had to – I loved it, I can’t tell you. So I knew that I had to get involved with this work. I went through another seasonal series and I was all the time going to different Circles of Trust. Then at some point I decided I really liked this a lot and I applied to go to Gateway.

Lois explained that she became a facilitator through the apprenticeship model rather than through facilitator preparation, which is the traditional route.

She recalled the most vivid situations, experiences, and people from Courage this way:

I got so much *insight* into not just why I was in it but what was my part in it and I was able to *see* from a whole different perspective and I think that’s why in the circle at the end I was able to *dance* and sing. I’m not a person who would get up and dance. My heart was opening. I was with like-minded people. I began to reclaim my identity and act with integrity in what I could ‘see’ as a safe, trusted environment. It’s like it was freeing for me to be able to see things about myself and situations that I had been in. It was a spiritual experience but it wasn’t a quote ‘religious’ experience.

When Lois mentioned this “safe, trusted environment” and being “with like-minded people”, I remember those exact feelings and descriptions at my own retreat. I also recall

a sense of awe at the distinctly spiritual but not religious essence of the experience. It seemed to be one of the factors that really drew me to the work; it was deep and meaningful without mention of church or any particular religious doctrine.

The second part of Lois's response to the situations, experiences and people who were vivid in her memory of Courage was also true for me but not until much later, as if it took time to develop.

I've always been able to get up and *do* but now I'm able to do it in a way that's not... angry or whatever just [sighs] neutrally almost. It's freeing that I've found a place when I feel like I can belong. For the first time I began to see my life as a journey, a process of movement in a spiritual sense, of advancing from one state to another with my own internal compass, rather than a trip with success as the destination and the need for someone else's map. Seeing my life in terms beyond success and my career, I uncovered some of those parts that had been carefully hidden in what Peggy McIntosh calls 'the invisible knapsack of white privilege'. I let go of my illusion that success is of utmost importance and moved toward knowing that my hidden wholeness is more important.

The Courage principles and practices Lois brings to her teaching practices were evident in her use of the touchstones and creation of safe space.

There is something about the touchstones; it's something about the fact that it's a *safe space* to be who you are. And that is what I try to create in my classes at the university is that safe space for the students and for myself. I've evolved a little bit; I'd put [the touchstones] in the syllabus and I'd go over it, but then I wouldn't



bring it up the rest of the time. But now I have them on chart paper, I'm taking it to class *every* time, posting it, talking about it, 'What's this mean?' I always say, 'is there anything you want to add? Is there a touchstone that you think we should pay attention to and add? Or is there anything you don't feel comfortable with on this list?'

She also uses poetry, "third things", in her instruction.

I read the poem, 'Where I'm From' by George Ella Lyon. Then I will have somebody else in the room read it. I have them write their own 'Where I'm From' poems and then of course I say, 'now I'll invite you to read' which I say it's always invitation never invasion, it's not share or die. We are supposed to be culturally responsive to our children but first we have to know who we are, where we come from, who we are, so I try to start with the issue of identity first with them and with myself. It does depend somewhat on the courses that you teach but also I think it takes awhile to feel comfortable to sort of slip it in because of the burdens we feel about the content.

Lois gave another example of using Courage practices in her teaching even when students work on required program assignments:

There are those opportunities that I'm trying to work with to be able to think of ways to get them there in a little bit more Courage like way rather than, 'ok this is an assignment you have to do for your portfolio'. If we do it in a way that's like a response to a third thing or a poem or something like that I think it will speak to who they are more.

Lois explained how she engaged her students in using open and honest questions and turning to wonder in a discussion around their frustration with situations they experience in their field placements: “They’re so upset about some of what they’re seeing and they wanna just blast the teachers and blast the administrators and I say, ‘well you know what we’ve got to do, we’ve gotta turn to wonder. What do you think? What do you wonder could be going on?’” She told me the students like the touchstone that says, “When the going gets tough, turn to wonder” to help create safe space in facing instances of feeling judgmental. She said they like it for the same reason I found myself liking it. Initially, it sounds ludicrous as way of dealing with frustration but if applied sincerely it often takes us to the core of where our friction lies.

When I asked Lois about her beliefs and intentions and how they inform her practice she began this way:

The first thing that has been a thread throughout my whole life is that my belief is that you must care about your children, your students whether those students are 5 years old or 55. The care and the love and trying to be respectful of everyone’s otherness or diversity, who they are – so that sort of always has driven me. Also believing in the person that’s sitting in front of you and looking for their best, what’s in their best interest.

One example of how she shows care for students is by using “a lot of feedback forms” on which Lois will give students the opportunity to write how the day went and why. She told me she makes an effort to “try to figure out how they’re feeling in the class, not just

what they're getting from it but how they're feeling". At the same time, Lois tells students there are things they must learn in order to serve their future students well.

I believe it is very important that you teach them something because caring is not enough. You have to care in order to be there in that space with your students but at the same time, you have to have knowledge, skills, strategies, beliefs that they can learn and they will if you can find the keys to unlock their learning.

Lois also described a three-part role as her purpose as a professor in teacher education as one of her beliefs:

I used to believe you know that whole thing 'sage on the stage'? That was number one. 'Guide on the side?' That was number two. Then I have come to a new one that I know is true. But, as I came to that one I realized that it takes all three of them and here's the third one: 'friend to the end'. And that one is, if I'm a friend to the end, I am also an advocate for them sometimes, and as that advocate I have to go back and be the sage on the stage and the guide on the side. It's too heavy for you at some points in your life. You cannot, without a 'friend to the end'.

A belief Lois wanted to include that incorporates the Courage work has to do with the learning environment in her classroom. She talked about the formal structure of Courage retreats and Circles of Trust and how she likes to provide different content activities and related third things within the structure of the Courage touchstones.

I've always said it's about the environment because it's like that's where you have to start. But it's not just creating it for the children you have to have it inside of you too. So it's that personal and professional that have to go together.

So it's the caring yes, that's the personal piece and you have to have it for yourself too, which has been a challenge for me. I think one of the things we do is give them an assignment but we don't *show* them by giving them our class time to do it, which is another principle of the Courage work that I try to integrate because in the Courage work you can sit there and you can do your work while you're in the circle, or when you're talking to each other, so it's like that is your work. So I try to give them time in the class.

Lois's definitions of the ideals and the real began with the roots of education – its purpose.

To me we have to have some foundational beliefs about the purposes of education. I would say the real wants workers, and they want status quo – to be able to keep things sort of the way that they are and at least apparent 'good' of the group or the country. To me they've got to be both. It's good to have standards and accountability. But we have to have both the real and ideal purposes so that they are committed to ethical and compassionate lives and it's not just about being a worker or making money. We have to be able to make decisions for the common good and for each individual.

The spiritual dimension is hidden because we can't always seem to let it out because there are conflicts or we're not all on the same page with this. I think it gets very heavily challenged most of the time and that's why new teachers leave. Or they get like, 'oh what the hell I'll do whatever they tell me to do' and then they lose heart. That little piece in there, that spiritual center, is the person, that's

the personal piece. It's the personal piece of being able to negotiate the real that you're confronted with and the ideal.

This ability to "negotiate the real" that confronts new teachers is what I witness and what I experienced myself teaching in a high-needs context. I see many teachers lose heart and although I felt sadness at Lois's assessment I knew she was speaking truth.

She explained dimensions of the ideal and the real as they occur for her within her university context:

Where I have had a lot of internal conflict about the real and the ideal is for example, the university and the state require specifics in your syllabus about reading instruction or assessment for reading and not only that but there are standards for the university in order for your program to be accredited so then you have to have all these specific assignments with rubrics that are graded on TK 20 so that the university, the *department* data, are collected. So I guess what I'm trying to say is that maybe in academia what we don't want to do is allow any of this quote 'spiritual' or 'hidden' or 'compassion' or 'dispositions' because we have created jobs for ourselves and a whole industry of teaching at that level. I'm just looking at that because if it's just about spiritual and not content knowledge which is what we're supposed to be teaching, then do you need a degree to do it? Or could you just do your mindfulness and your meditation and go do a good job of that?

This echoed for me into work at K-12, which has rapidly or perhaps not so rapidly become a business or "industry" as Lois named it where curriculum, teaching and

learning, and assessments are all neatly packaged and distributed. I wondered to what extent she could be right about the intentionality of the lack of space for the relational part of teaching and learning.

As we moved into a discussion about the gap between the ideal and the real, I felt more echoes and more sting of truth.

One of the gaps that I feel is that I'm a teacher. I'm a teacher. I'm a *teacher*.

And it took me years to be able to say 'I'm a professor' but really in my heart I'm a teacher. A big piece of my tragic gap is all the issues of otherness and holding that tension, the socioeconomic. I did not come from [luxury] and a dean I worked for called me a 'worker bee'. Now there's a difference being a worker bee and being a whatever they think is important in their organization you know what I mean?

Hearing this I knew Lois and I really are members of the same tribe. *We are* "worker bees" and feel a level of pride in it. We are not striving for the highest ranks at university nor do we feel we belong there. Our work is our service to schools. We are teachers. Perhaps that is the crux of the next tragic gap Lois described and perhaps not but I have seen this gap as a cooperating teacher working with student teachers and I have seen it as an adjunct professor:

The tragic gaps I see are many and the biggest tragic gap that I faced in my work in teacher preparation is between *the university and the schools!* We are collaborating to prepare the teachers with student teaching and the university and it's hard to get the two to meet. Schools reward teachers for being there, getting

the kids to learn however – their scores. Now they're able to go and some kids' scores they can trace them back to the teacher and then the teacher's preparation program. It's like, 'who taught you to teach? And why aren't your children learning?' So that's a big gap.

So that, that is you and me and all of our teachers in the classroom. So they don't get pulled out of the balance to the real or out of the balance to the ideal. And this part about the foundational purposes and beliefs of education? That goes to our US society and a bigger global society. Because the standards and accountability are sort of in with the real but they're also laid on us by our society. We need that support system and the encouragement to keep on going when it's too heavy to carry by yourself. It needs to be bigger than your classroom because what happens when they graduate and go out to the schools? And what happens when you don't have any support system? You can fall. That high-needs schools stuff is tough. I believe that one of the greatest things that the Courage work does is helps teachers stay true to themselves and the profession, helps them stay longer.

Lois's ideal teacher education program would include some of the Courage work in a combination of "real" standards and "ideal" development of wholeness.

I think that a teacher education program has to be somehow connected with their clients; that is the schools as well as the students they're working with. There have to be some kind of standards for the profession – I think you have to have that as frameworks or foundations or belief systems to be able to give your

students an approved program so that when they leave you they're going be able to go get jobs and be hired and know what they have to do. That's part of the real.

I want my teachers to believe they are always in a stage of development. It's not about teacher preparation, it's about teacher development for me or I think Parker used the word teacher 'formation'. It has to be the mindset, the belief that it just keeps going and we control that by some of our decisions and that too because we decide we're whether gonna keep working on it or we're gonna run away. I want them to believe in themselves as being ready to teach but not finished developing [toward wholeness].

I think an ideal one that there would be people in the schools of education working together to support what the department is trying to do. Many times I see it fragment. And one of the problems we have as universities is we don't go to the schools enough. We're not as up to date on what's going on in the schools and in my ideal we would even have offices in the schools and we would live there part of the time. I would do things like we're trying to do which is plant the seeds early on in the courses. I would spread out some of the Courage work ideas and activities across a program. We say we want to prepare our students to be with the dispositions to be leaders in their schools and advocates for democracy and social justice, we say that in our mission, but I don't see it in every class across our programs. It needs to be clear that that's what we believe in.



These things in education are cyclical. So back in the 60s there was a lot on teacher dispositions there's a lot of research around that but, when you look at the accreditation process in higher ed, they don't care about teacher dispositions. And even though they used to talk about teacher dispositions when we had NCATE, now we have a new accreditation agency CAEP, and we happen to be one of the states that's right on that, they took that away. They are not asking about teacher's dispositions, they're saying, "Get out there, get the job done, and suck it up".

There needs to be something beyond for when they hit the wall, when they're out there on their own. They get out there thinking, "Oh my god I'm a new teacher, I can do this" but that they get scared, I guess it's because they don't have a strong enough sense of community or place. I don't know if there is a certain developmental level but that's a question to ask myself: Is Courage work a developmentally appropriate practice for pre-service teachers? In their level of development or career stage are they able, willing... and I believe that they are, some, which is why I think that it might be appropriate to, of course, plant the seeds. See, I see what I'm doing right now as planting seeds but what I wanted to do was have a garden and a course.

I found this note in one of the artifacts Lois gave me:

As I have continued to journey within Circles of Trust, I have changed the way I see. My paradigm has shifted from trying to understand how I might contribute

to the reform of education, especially teacher education, and participate in a movement for non-violence, to one of spiritual formation.

I have experienced a similar shift but have not been able to convey my change in words so succinct.

### **Alex**

Not knowing what to expect when I would finally arrive to meet Alex, I was not prepared for the impact of our time together. By the time I left her living room I felt that I had met my mentor. But that isn't and there isn't an adequate way for me to describe the way I felt during and since meeting and interviewing Alex. It took some time for me to express it to her because of the depth at which the words she spoke affected me. The best I can do is to say it was like she was a much wiser sister – she felt like kin to me. She seemed to have grown from the same tree, have the same organic roots. It felt like we had shared a parallel childhood (although a few of her comments made it clear that hers was different). She seemed to think and act the way I do- she is blonde and magnetic. She speaks frankly. At one point in the interview she said, “I haven't always done Courage work but I've always been Alex” and this statement is indicative of the strength of her personality. What's different about her is that she has grown; she has evolved far beyond where I stand now. Because she is so much like me in personality, because our work overlaps in the area of elementary education and Courage, because she was the last participant, and/or because she spoke so directly... I am still unsure why what Alex told me in the interview hit me so directly and affected me so deeply.

I traveled to the west coast to meet Alex on a quite abbreviated trip, meaning we would have only one face to face interview. I wish I could have spent more time with Alex and in California as I feel drawn to live there, but as it turned out we had one afternoon together before I had to return to the airport and work the next morning. I left the hotel at noon and taxied to her home. We had already communicated by email and text and I was excited to meet her. She opened the door and we hugged in greeting. She was lithe, warm, and smooth-voiced. The first thing I noticed was the afternoon light in her home and the richness of lots of wood. I had trouble to pull my eyes away from the wall of books and she told me she and her daughter had just organized the entire wall so that the spines of all the books were aligned to the edge of the shelves. I wanted to look at each title, touch all of those books. Instead we moved to two chairs after admiring the stunning view from the living room windows, the needles of the pines outside just out of reach on the other side of the glass. Alex folded her long legs and socked feet under her. She had some papers with her as she had prepared some answers to my questions, which made our discussion quite focused and for that I was grateful since we had only the afternoon.

“We always joke that ‘Alex got into it accidentally’.” In her reconstruction of coming to the work of Parker Palmer and *Courage to Teach*, Alex explained that she was given the book *The Courage to Teach* by accident. “It was given to me as a gift and I opened it up and my boss said, ‘Oh my god they wrapped the wrong book at the bookstore – I would never give you a book like that!’ and I was like, ‘No you wouldn’t ever give me a book about the ‘inner landscape’ of anyone’s life!’ and we kind of laughed and I said,

‘but it looks interesting, I’ll keep it, don’t worry about it.’” Though I feel that my introduction to CTT was also somewhat accidental, I did not read the book until after I had been to a retreat. Like Alex, I felt almost unable to act upon what I read but felt a deep resonance. She described it as a feeling of “wow, I was underlining things and thinking about it but I just didn’t have anyplace to... I didn’t know what I was going to do with that.” The book discusses teaching in ways that no other has done in terms of the heart of the teacher and the calling in the work. Remembering the first retreat, Alex described thoughts that were identical to mine. “I got a flier in my box at work and I’ve never gone on a retreat. I’m not one of these people that retreat. I’m thinking, ‘that’s that guy’ and it sounds interesting so I signed up.” We laughed at her statement, “I’m not one of those people who retreat”. This was an example of our like-mindedness; I had the same thoughts about my first retreat and wondered as I was driving up the mountain, “What is this really? Who am I really? This is so out of character and yet not so I’m just going. We’ll see.”

The experiences, situations, and people Alex described as being vivid in her memory about the retreat and her later path through facilitator preparation were the exact thoughts that swirled in my head in my bunk at night at the outdoor ed mountain camp during my experience. I particularly echoed the wonder at my lack of understanding yet deep comfort and relief.

I was just so *amazed* you know at the people that were there. I don’t know that I said a whole lot; I went with it, I’m a very open and trusting person. I *loved* the poetry, I *loved* the... ideas... though I really didn’t understand any of it; I really

didn't know why I liked it, really what it was, why was it so powerful. It was like coming home, a sense of belonging more than anything and a sense of community that we're all in this together. It still feels like that at the end of a circle, a weekend. This may sound odd but... there's always a real lift, a real weight lifted off my shoulders about the work in the world because I see the amazing people doing stuff out there and listening to their stories and seeing the integrity in which they're holding this. I feel very much like whew, I don't have to be frenetic, I just keep doing my part. I can just stand in my own place and I don't have to fix everything.

Alex recounted her experience with Parker Palmer and Marcy and Rick Jackson (the three founders of the Center for Courage and Renewal) and noted that her cohort was the first to include people in professions outside education. "I find that working cross-professionally is really helpful and I think it's really good for teachers to be outside their teacher bubbles."

To me, Alex seems to have the best-case scenario in terms of merging her teaching practice with the principles of Courage work. When she told me the university is a fiscal sponsor of CTT I first thought that she is able to teach pre-service teachers using CTT. She explained the situation by clarifying that the program is for teachers in the field, and is primarily supported by grants from a local family foundation. Teacher who participate gather for retreats on weekends and during the summer.

My CTT program and my classroom teaching are really different things for me. They're getting closer together but they're still different. They have to be

different because of the nature of it being not totally invitational in a classroom and I'm in a position of power there. The principles and practices most key for me are "no fixing, no saving, no advising" which is a touchstone and it's also a principle. The other is open honest questions which I find invaluable to teach my students: to ask open honest questions about what kids are writing and what kids are reading or in creating classroom community and how to ask questions of students even around issues of discipline or behavior. The other kind of principle I think is that the natural world is a huge teacher for us... that life moves in cycles like the seasons and that if we can only trust that ours will too. I think that has tied in so much for me around mindfulness. One of the things I do in my teaching practice is I always start with silence in my seminars and I use a chime and I teach them how to breathe so when you're in the classroom rather than reacting you can breathe into [the situation]. So I think helping teachers understand that [pain, frustration] that's all normal and then there's this practice that can be helpful to them and that they have to take care of themselves so that they're *not* reacting. Because that's what it's *like*, it's *crazy* in a classroom. I have to actually *teach, people, children* how to be kind to one another, how to resolve conflicts, how to deal with stuff that comes up, how to do their own mindfulness things. I started incorporating all of that into the seminars. And how to offer that to kids, one step further: so you need this, how do you create classrooms where kids are having experiences where their inner lives are also valued?

The principles and practices therefore clearly play a role in her teaching. The reiteration of the two-pronged goal of making the Courage principles work for teachers *and* their students lifted my heart. I asked Alex to elaborate when she told me “it’s been very difficult to integrate this into the school of education”. She explained what I have intuited about the circumstances of academia, that is, the “climbing of the mountain”, the push for one’s own interests, the collaboration or lack thereof, the changing of department chairs, et cetera. Particular to CTT/the heart of the teacher, she explained:

It’s just not written in the [teacher education program] standards. It’s not in the standards. All of our syllabi, our standards for what a teacher education... we have our own accreditation standards. Everything in your syllabus must be connected unless it’s me who says, ‘I’m gonna do this anyway, I’ll connect it’. They are very standards driven – ‘What’s the *standard* around this?’. The courses I have written, developed, and work is where I’ve been able to craft it but I have to use a lot of other words and language.

Alex struggled in attempting to answer my question about how her beliefs and intentions inform her practice. My question was poorly worded in that I did not specify beliefs and intentions *related to Courage*, which rendered the question too broad. Alex told me she would answer off the top of her head, the way she read the question.

My beliefs and intentions are that each of us is a powerful force in the world and teachers are a powerful force. It is only through recognizing our own gifts and limitations that we can continue faithfully to try to do the right thing. People who go into education to become educators have a sense of they can make a difference

and make the world better and we're foolin' ourselves to think that we can do that alone and we're foolin' ourselves to think we can do it without taking a hard look at our own struggles that we come up against and how should we react and how should we work with them. I really do believe that if each person just focused on looking for the opportunity in front of them and then reacting to that from a solid place, we would make huge strides toward a trajectory toward justice. So that is a belief and intention that I hold that informs everything I do. I certainly think that's why Courage work resonates with me so much.

Indeed this belief about the impossibility of doing the work alone and doing it without reflection and renewal practice was something about which I found myself nodding emphatically at her words.

Alex went on to give precise examples throughout our talk of how the principles and practices of Courage work and her resulting beliefs and intentions inform her teaching practice with her students.

I create safe spaces where people can be vulnerable but they've got to be safe spaces where other people can't psychologically damage them or physically hurt them. And that's what we're called to do with children too in classrooms. In my teaching, we just come in and we just get present and we bring ourselves fully into the room. I'll offer a poem or some other third thing and ask some formative questions around it about their practice this week. Then I'll have them journal on that and they get together in triads and share and ask each other open and honest questions. Then we share out as a whole group. And then we might move into



content when we talk about multiple intelligences, we look at social emotional learning theory, we look at mindfulness and we look at responsive classroom and child development theory.

When I asked her to describe her purpose as a professor in higher education, Alex talked about the things she wished for her students.

My purpose is to prepare thoughtful, informed, reflective practitioners who strive to develop each student to the full capacity while recognizing the individual dignity of each student. I want my students to *know* that it's hard. I want them to know that there's this gap out there. I want them to know the history of education – how did we get here? – and I want them to know how individual teachers have so much power to form or deform individual students.

I thought back to my teacher education master's program and how well prepared I was but we talked about how it changes and widens a teacher's perspective to see the current system situated historically. I didn't see this greater perspective until my doctoral coursework and I agreed with her that one purpose of teacher education should be to open that lens.

Alex added an aspect of the gap when she talked about her purpose:

Where the tragic gap lies for me is that my hope is that in doing that I am creating teachers who will be able to know bullshit when they see it and stand up and stop it and be teacher leaders who won't just do bad things and just continue... they'll say, 'No'. We've got people standing up in districts saying, 'No we're not gonna do this anymore'. There are a number of schools where I'll go out now and I'll

see 10, 12 teachers and 6 or 7 of them working together, they're my students from over the years and I haven't always done Courage work but I've always been Alex.

She explained her conceptions of the ideal and the real in the following way:

My [definition of] ideal is you have a school that is creating the community of learners where students are seen as whole human beings and teachers are also seen that way and that we're all working together to the benefit of the students. To me not paying attention to the teachers is a missing piece; we cannot just weave the interests of the teachers out and expect that they will be able to create communities for students. The ideal would be that we pay attention to both those things and that we create healthy teachers who understand that the work is hard and are able to take risks, ask for help, collaborate with other people, and know when their own shadow is alive. To me that is the ideal and we are very far from that.

I do not believe tests are bad: we could use tests, but I don't think you need to focus the world around them. What's going on is that we've got this huge idea that if we just teach the basics and we focus on the basics of reading and writing and arithmetic without thinking and without focusing on social emotional understanding and understanding ourselves... we've taken liberal arts education and said we don't really need that; they need a job. We have to stop thinking as professionals that if we just had a better educational system we could fight all the social injustices- no we can't.

When Alex said this I felt the sense of community and weight being lifted off my shoulders that she associated with Circles of Trust earlier in our interview. I have been feeling this and feeling “frenetic” about it for years. When she said “create healthy teachers who understand that the work is hard” and “we have to stop thinking we could fight all the social injustices” it felt like I had been carrying a boulder on my back and she had just lifted it off of me. After I expressed my frustration in navigating the gap and my inability to tolerate it – I was exasperated – she stunned me with these wise words:

The idea of the tragedy is that it'll *never be*, never be closed because the point of the tragic gap, the point of it is that the ideal, all ideals are not ever gonna happen in reality because we live in a natural world that cycles through. We *know* that those ideals can happen because we've seen glimpses of them, we've seen little times where they happen, we've seen little places in our own hearts that have changed, we've seen other people's hearts change, we know that can happen and we've seen transformation. But the point of the tragic gap is to, to illustrate so it's there. So how are we gonna deal with it? How can I deal with it in a life giving way versus a death dealing way? Our job is not to collapse on either one of those two poles. It's an illustration of a polemic and how do you stand in the middle of that without collapsing? We do this; this is how we work. But how do you do this? How do you stand- you learn to balance that by being really true to who you are. And the way you are really true to who you are is by acknowledging your light and your shadow. There's this wonderful Victoria Stafford poem about

standing at the gates of hope, and she illustrates this tragic gap, what that means so well.

Two feelings rise when I talk about that. One is a lot of ‘ahhh...’ kind of feelings of connectedness and beauty and the other is a feeling of ... angst a little bit that it’s just not gonna get there like that in my lifetime. I have to resolve that and understand that I still need to be faithful to my own ideas about what could be, even though I don’t think at this point now... I mean when I was 23 and just starting out I figured my god, by now? It’s gone in the opposite direction.

Regarding an ideal teacher education program, Alex named several specific qualities. She talked at length about the disconnect between fieldwork and university classes and the body of knowledge pre-service teachers take into their first jobs. She emphasized exposure to many different environments “to see what could be” as well as being informed about how schools work (including funding) and having knowledge of their power as professionals. She noted the problems associated with teachers being trained as experts on content and standards in the current system and the results of that narrow training.

The commission on teacher credentialing standards is focused on achieving academic content standards for students and there’s no [acknowledgement] that teachers need to be thoughtful or understanding. Then teachers go in there like, ‘I’m trying my best, nothing’s working’ and they quit! Half of them quit. My ideal teacher education is that we have schools where our teachers are trained they’re trained in that ideal as much as possible. We don’t need this distance

between teacher ed and the world. We don't have a system that works together. They don't work together. We should also talk about, 'How does race, how does your own privilege influence your teaching', when they're doing their student teaching. I think it should be more reflective. I think the medical model is a good one. We should have internships where they're paid and they're doing rounds before that where they're seeing lots of things.

### **Conclusion**

In qualitative tradition, the data that appears in the portraits above illustrates the essence of the experience of the gap between the ideal and the real through vivid explanatory text that includes thick description and participants' own words. This narrative, reduced from transcripts and artifacts provided by the participants and complemented by my connections to their wisdom and reflections on my own experience. Joseph, Elizabeth, Lois, and Alex each shared their personal stories and beliefs with me in a space of trust and confidentiality. I am honored to have shared their reflections here.

In Chapter Five, the patterns and themes that rise from this data will be analyzed and synthesized in light of their correspondence with the literature. In Chapter Six conclusions from this body of work, resulting implications, and recommendations for future study will be discussed.

## **Chapter Five: Analysis and Synthesis**

### **Introduction and Methodological Reflection**

This chapter will be organized into two sections. In the first section, I will analyze the findings from the data gathered from my work with the participants. In that data I found patterns and themes of the gap between the ideal and the real in education. I will discuss how those patterns and themes correspond with the literature and those that were unanticipated. In the second section, I will present a synthesis of the gap.

The research question that drove the study is: How do teacher education faculty who are influenced by Palmer's work as *Courage to Teach* facilitators experience the gap that exists between the ideal and the real in the current educational landscape? I developed the following sub-questions to explore the research question:

1. What are the teacher educators' beliefs and intentions regarding the gap?
2. How do their beliefs and intentions inform their practice in preparing pre-service teachers?

As I created the depictions and portraits, the sub-questions and specific interview questions began to organize the themes that emerged in describing the experience of the participants. I built my interview questions in part using Patton's (2002) Matrix of Question Options:

<b>A Matrix of Question Options</b>			
<i>Question Focus</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Future</i>
Behaviors/experiences			
Opinions/values			
Feelings/emotions			
Knowledge			
Sensory			
Background			

Figure 2. A Matrix of Question Options (Patton, 2002).

Questions 1 and 2 in the interview focused on the reconstruction and experience of Courage work and the accompanying feelings to uncover the context in which the teacher educators worked. Retracing their path into Courage proved to be a heartfelt and enjoyable experience for the participants and me. The background questions, which revitalized our past emotions, were useful in bringing us into the present discussion space. They also prompted a series of words and phrases that described emotions and sensations common to the Courage experience: “home”, “belonging”, “safety”, “relief”, “freeing”, and “spiritual but not religious.” It is moving to experience these emotions connected to one’s vocation partly because as educators we never have time to engage in deep self-study. To hear others describe their experience using identical terms was

affirming and added to the depth and sense of community of the work. I feel it is important to include this information because it affirms the relationship between the participants and me regarding the depth of exploration we were able to achieve.

One area of focus was interview questions 5, “How do you define the terms ‘ideal’ and ‘real’ in the current educational landscape?” and 6, “Parker Palmer refers to the gap between what is and what we know could be as a ‘tragic gap’. Do you agree?” Although I have provided specific definitions of ideal and real in this study, the participants see additional aspects and levels pertaining to the gap. Their knowledge and experience allowed them to view the terms and issues more broadly and offer opinions based on their view, more so than I was able to see from my vantage point.

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which participants’ beliefs and intentions inform their teaching practices. In question 3 I asked, “What are the key Courage practices and principles for you? What role, if any, do these fill in your teaching in higher education?” In question 7 I asked, “What beliefs and intentions do you bring to your teaching?” When I wrote the interview guide, I believed these questions would explore participants’ behaviors and accompanying values and feelings, but the response to question 7 was awkward, and participants asked me, “What do you mean? In general?” I could have amended question 7 to read: “What *other* beliefs and intentions do you bring...?”, or “What *Courage* beliefs and intentions do you bring? I collapsed questions 3 and 7 in analysis because of the overlap of the responses.

Finally, I wish to note that while I was diligent in my analysis, writing contact summary forms, transcribing verbatim, memo-ing, collapsing and winnowing the data—



following Moustakas's steps in creating depictions and portraits for individuals one at a time and categorizing responses to unwrap themes— much of the analysis below is tacit in nature. Moustakas (1990) describes tacit knowledge as “a capacity that allows one to sense the unity or wholeness of something from an understanding of the individual qualities or parts” (p. 20-21). I arrived at my findings through the research process, and the validity of the findings lies in the participants' agreement that I wrote their portraits and captured their experiences accurately. Also, Moustakas (1990) confirmed that:

[The] judgment is made by the primary researcher, who is the only person in the investigation who has undergone the heuristic inquiry from the beginning formulation of the question through the phases of incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis not only with himself or herself, but with each and every co-researcher. (p. 32)

### **Section One: Analysis**

“How finely can we partition the acts of teaching?” (B. Joyce, 1975, p. 142).

#### **Theme 1: Multifaceted Definitions of “Ideal” and “Real”**

**The “ideal” possibilities.** The calling, heart, and spiritual self who teaches are terms I have used to define the ideal in teaching and education. For the participants, the ideal is somewhat the same, but it expands to include a holistic view of teachers and students on a larger scale. Each participant talked about the growth and development of the individual student and the ideal that lies beyond our reach: teachers and students working together holistically, ethically, collaboratively, and compassionately. Two concepts capture the holistic ideal represented in the portraits: “the good” and “Habits of the Heart.”

***“The good.”*** The participants described ways of teaching and universal worldviews that take an individual good *and* common good approach. Joseph referred to writer and philosopher Dame Iris Murdoch’s writings on “the good.” In the following excerpt (1992) she wrote about the good as the ideal:

The idea of Good (goodness, virtue) crystallizes out of our moral activity... what is fundamental here is ideal or transcendent, never fully realised or analysed, but continually rediscovered in the course of the daily struggle with the world, and the imagination and the passion whereby it is carried on. (pp. 426-427)

This idea of “the good” and the idea of a greater common good is now an aim of the Greater Good Science Center (GGSC), which “studies the psychology, sociology, and neuroscience of well-being, and teaches skills that foster a thriving, resilient, and compassionate society” (<http://greatergood.berkeley.edu>). The GGSC provides scholarships to UC Berkeley for undergraduate and graduate students and has an education program for students, teachers, and school leaders that focuses on social emotional learning, contemplative practice, and positive school culture.

Alex named social-emotional learning as a large part of the ideal in education, and another initiative that gives social-emotional learning a prominent place in education is PassageWorks: Engaged Teaching and Learning, founded by Rachel Kessler and her colleagues in Boulder, Colorado in 2001 (<http://passageworks.org>). Passageworks, with its focus on the inner life of students and curriculum for use in schools, is an ally of The Center for Courage and Renewal.

***“Habits of the Heart.”*** Lois talked about adopting Habits of the Heart, (<http://www.couragerenewal.org/habitsoftheheart/>) which was an idea originally posed by the French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville who when visiting the United

States in the 1830s noticed the individualism in American society. Palmer calls these Habits “deeply ingrained ways of seeing, being, and responding to life that involve our minds, our emotions, our self-images, our concepts of meaning and purpose.” They are: (1) an understanding that we are all in this together; (2) an appreciation of the “value of otherness”; (3) an ability to hold tension in life-giving ways; (4) a sense of personal voice and agency; and (5) a capacity to create community (<http://www.couragerenewal.org/habitsoftheheart/>). These Habits of the Heart are also associated with the idea of the good toward which we strive, although, according to Murdoch, it is truly an ideal, not real. Like the Courage Touchstones (Appendix C), they are guides to living productively as individuals, and they lead us to become interconnected with our communities. This interconnection is important for all of us but particularly for people in education whose immediate and larger communities serve as networks of support.

**The “real” – tempered.** Joseph, Elizabeth, Lois, and Alex all acknowledge the heavy emphasis on standards and accountability that comes at the expense of a holistic and balanced view of education. All were thoughtful, though, in their reticence to discredit the “real” as I described it. Elizabeth said she recognized my dichotomous view, but for her the reality “doesn’t come from mal intent” but from “narrowness in how education is being viewed and implemented,” which creates a culture of fear focused on accountability. She said we need balance because we need accountability and checkpoints along with content knowledge, but “the more we take that big chunk of teaching and make it technical, the more we are going to lose teachers and students.”

Lois and Alex also discussed their belief that we need the both/and of ideal and real. They asserted that while the real does include standards and accountability, we have to have ways to show students and teachers are prepared. They believe that right now the focus is simply too heavy on the real, that technique and testing cannot take over teaching and learning.

Joseph explained the reality of the current focus in historical terms: “We’re at a particular manifestation of the divide between progressive and conservative traditions. Do I think divide is going to go away? No. Do I think progressive education has the solution? Or the ideal has the solution? No. Do I think the reality is always the devil in disguise? No.” Lois pointed out that education policy has gone through cycles, moving between contemporary calls for competency and humanistic-based teacher education that was popular in the 1960s (Korthagen, 2004).

**Summary of Theme 1** I know and was aware prior to this research that there is value in having standards and accountability for students and teachers. I am in agreement with the participants that the reality new teachers face is overwhelmingly standardized and out of balance in terms of what is valued in their practice. We come back to the paradox: education now is residing at the external, measurable, outcome-based pole rendering us caught in an either/or situation. What is elucidated in this theme is the call for both/and.

## **Theme 2: Teacher Education: The Ideal as a Diverse Network**

I asked Alex, Joseph, Elizabeth, and Lois to describe their ideal teacher educator program. Each of them offered a number of changes to the current traditional model of coursework focused on competencies and technical skills.

**University/school connection.** The two professors with the most contact with students in their field placements are Alex and Lois. Joseph categorized the difference between K-12 and universities as a gap just as Alex and Lois did. He noted generally, “school practice is a little more tradition bound; teacher education is a little more ‘progressive bound.’” Alex and Lois spoke specifically about the need for a cohesive partnership between university professors and teachers in the schools where students are doing their student teaching. Alex said plainly, “We don’t need this distance between teacher ed and the world. I mean, they don’t need to come to classes in the evening and listen to me and then go into a school and... I should be out there. That should be part of my *job*.” She explained that there had been a different arrangement at her university in the past when she worked closely with teachers in the field. On a weekly basis, education faculty and K-12 teachers used release time to meet. During these times they could collaborate, and Alex made connections in her classes to the experiences students were having in the schools. “But it’s harder for me to do if I don’t know what their [cooperating] teacher is doing, and I don’t know how, based on their limited understanding of what’s going on, to give them any help.”

Lois explained the disconnect similarly:

We are collaborating to prepare the teachers with student teaching and the university, and it’s hard to get the two to meet. I mean I used to go to meetings at 7:00 in the morning at the schools so that I could talk to them about my syllabus because the teachers in the school didn’t understand what I was doing or why I had to ask the [students] to do this.

Both Alex and Lois noted the resulting amount of work that is put on preservice teachers in this disconnected scenario, which limits what they can do as students in their courses and as student teachers at their schools.

**Self-study.** The participants emphasized the importance of self-study and the development of self-knowledge as a critical part of teacher education. Lois spoke of the spiritual aspect of the self in terms of navigating the gap new teachers will face. “That little piece in there, that spiritual center, is the person, that’s the personal piece of being able to negotiate the real that you’re confronted with and the ideal.” She also pointed out the lip service that is paid to identity development in teacher education programs:

“See, we do a lot of teaching so you can pass Praxis but it needs to be clear what we believe in. Now like we say we want to prepare our students to be with the dispositions to be leaders in their schools and advocates for democracy and social justice. We say that in our mission, but I don’t see it in every class across our programs.”

Elizabeth also mentioned the lack of inner work in teacher education. She advocated for an invitational but still necessary approach. “I’m not saying we need to indoctrinate people but we need to expose them to different ways to grow as a person and as a community and then they’ll take those things back.”

Alex framed the lack of inner work in the context of attrition:

Teachers need to have knowledge of themselves as professionals... Teachers are trained so narrowly on content, and they go in, and it doesn’t *work*. And they think, “I’m doing everything right.” I want them to know *it’s hard*; it needs to be more reflective. We should talk more about what influences their teaching. We

cannot just weave the teachers out and expect they can create these *communities* in their classrooms.

**Variety.** All four of the participants recommended a more contextually diverse experience for students while in their education program so that they would come into their first jobs prepared with a wider view of teaching possibilities.

Alex spoke to me about the appropriateness of the medical model for teacher education: “I like the idea of internships where they are doing rounds, getting paid, seeing lots of things.” She has seen teachers who have no idea of what could be happening in classrooms get stuck in poorly-funded schools with a “this is how it is” mindset, unaware of possibilities for themselves and their students. She commented that they “just need to get out of there and *see what could be!*”

Elizabeth talked about preservice teachers who have had no experiences as coaches, camp counselors, or AmeriCorps volunteers. “I think in teacher education we do them a service by exposing them to different kinds of environments. But I think we are missing that group that’s just not fitting in with their context or their biography.” She explained that some people are counseled out of teaching when they should have been offered the chance to explore other teaching possibilities, for example, a suburban school teacher who might otherwise be a perfect fit for outdoor education. Teacher education programs must be aware of this deeper part of our calling. It would be valuable to have students observe different teaching scenarios, like the work before the work— finding out more about who you are and different ways of teaching. Courage work helps us become more aware of the idea of matching the role and soul.

Joseph proposed the notion of programs with a particular framework or tradition: “It would be [ideal] if we could give them a taste of many different points of view, and they could sign up for a program and say, ‘I want to be that kind of teacher when I get out.’”

**Summary of Theme 2** The theme, Teacher Education: The Ideal as a Diverse Network shows that we are far from providing preservice teachers the opportunity to make connections between their university program work and the apprentice work they do in schools that are theoretically partnered with those programs. We are offering a one-size-fits-all style of education in an environment that is commonly presented in a disconnected system.

**Theme 3: The Gap is Tragic and *Permanent***

The theme that was most prominent in the participants’ portraits was that the gap between the ideal and the real (as I have defined it, in all areas of education, and in life in general) is in fact tragic and will never close. Each participant answered “Yes” when I asked if they believe there is a gap between ideal and real in the current educational landscape, but then we began to wonder about—discussion began about—whether or not this gap was tragic. Certainly, it is tragic in that schoolchildren and their teachers are being lost in the current of testing, test scores, standards and whether or not anyone (everyone) is meeting them. Joseph noted that there are instances like these when the gap is doubtless tragic: “What makes it a tragedy is that it *doesn’t seem to be resolvable*. It seems to me in our heart of hearts... it’s a heartfelt sense.”



The ideal/real gap that exists for the participants has many more facets than that which I defined. Like in Theme 1, they spoke of the facets as separate gaps between different ideal and real scenarios within teacher education. For example, Lois and Alex talked about the gap between the university education program and the cooperating schools where student teachers are placed. Lois talked about the gap between clinical professors and tenured professors, between those who do research and those who do not, specifically in terms of perceived status. She explained:

It took me years to be able to say “I’m a professor,” but really I’m a teacher. I’m a *teacher*. A big piece of my tragic gap is around otherness and holding the tension, the socioeconomic. I did not come from luxury, and a dean called me a worker bee. Now there’s a big difference between being a worker bee and whatever they think is important in their organization [research and grants], you know what I mean?

Joseph talked with me about the historical gap between educational traditions: progressive, conservative, radical, and spiritual. Elizabeth talked about gaps being evident in our lives. We want to reach goals but fall short; there is always some ideal that we cannot quite reach, and that is part of the human experience. Each participant echoed that the gap represents the essence of the struggle in the human experience.

The gap is also not the sole responsibility or fault of the education system (Day, 2004; Fukuyama, 1999; Noddings, 2003, 2013). Lois and Alex talked with me about new teachers taking on the responsibilities of school and society. Alex said, “We have to stop

thinking, as professionals, that if we just had a better educational system, we could fight all the social injustices. No, we can't.”

**Summary of Theme 3** This theme, The Gap is Tragic and *Permanent*, is exemplified in the discussions above. Palmer (2009) wrote these words, which echo those of wisdom traditions:

The gap is “tragic” not merely because it is sad but because (in the Greek, biblical, Shakespearian sense of the word) it is inevitable, inexorable, inescapable. The form it takes changes over time, but there will always be a gap between what is and what could and should be.

#### **Theme 4: Courage Work Changes Your Way of Being in the World**

**Professional teaching practice.** Joseph, Lois, Alex, and Elizabeth believe in the principles and practices of Courage work and use them in their teaching practice.

**Safe space.** Teaching students how to ask open and honest questions, discussing the Touchstones, for example “no fixing or saving,” using chimes to signal space, establishing trust, and providing an open invitation are ways that Elizabeth, Lois, and Alex create safe space for students to begin to bring an inner focus to the work in their classes. Alex explains the purpose of these practices:

I start with silence in my seminars and I use a chime and I teach students how to breathe so when you're in the classroom instead of reacting you can breathe into [the situation]. It's important to help teachers understand that [pain and frustration] that's all normal, and then there's this practice that can be helpful to them and that they have to take care of themselves so they're *not* reacting.

**Deep listening.** The silence aids in creating a safe space, and it also plays a part in the deep listening to others and to our own inner voice. Palmer’s assertion that “deep speaks to deep” (2004, p. 113) includes listening to others without responding immediately; offering silence and long pauses after someone speaks. Allowing the person’s words to settle and then refraining from using commentary but instead asking open and honest questions are ways to listen deeply that are practiced in Circles of Trust. Joseph shared, “the Courage world has enabled me to articulate more clearly that aspect of what it means to attend to and listen deeply to participants in a classroom... I do try to create spaces where people can hear each other.”

**Third things.** Third things – poems, essays, or works of art – that are used to facilitate discussion of our inner selves are provided to students by each of the participants in some capacity. Joseph describes his selected readings this way: “They are either philosophical essays, or memoirs, or fiction that I use to try to illuminate some of the dilemmas we find ourselves in in the education world. They trigger cognitive and emotional responses in readers.” Alex ties the use of third things to the students’ work in the schools: “I’ll offer a poem and then ask some formative questions around it about their practice during the week and I’ll have them journal about that.” Elizabeth and Lois have students read poems, chorally or by invitation, as would be done in Circles of Trust, and she follows up with questions such as “What spoke to you?” or “What resonates?”

**Personal shifts.** The practices that take place during Courage retreats have become part of the lifestyle of the participants in this study. Mindfulness activities such as meditation, silent walking, yoga, and writing may have been present prior to Courage, but

they become more important and more integrated into daily life after. The self-knowledge that begins in Courage to Teach is pursued and shared.

Joseph told me that he takes five-mile walks in his attempt to enter contemplative space. Of the Courage experience he said, “It offered to me a distinctly *different* way of being in the world and a different *container* to offer others.” Elizabeth also mentioned her walks and described her experience this way: “I just knew this was my path! It’s a real privilege to have encountered that way of living and being and for me it’s hard to turn my face from it... I have a feeling of deep gratitude and also wanting to provide those kinds of opportunities for other people.” Lois shared some of her writing with me – she identifies herself as a writer now – and recalled the importance of self-knowledge as she entered into the Courage community: “I had to find out about me, my own identity... I thought if I’m gonna teach this, I have to be able to get it from my heart.” She describes how she shares this self-study with students in her classes by encouraging them to create their own poems. “First we have to know who we are, so I try to start with the issue of identity first with them and with myself.” Alex explained the importance of her daily yoga and mindfulness practice that she has adopted since becoming involved in Courage: “What I realized is something that I needed desperately when I started this work was that I needed a mindfulness practice. I was always thinking I was gonna have one while I was frenetically running all over. And that’s been really transformative for me.” She shares this calm approach with students through her teaching practices, and, like Elizabeth, she emphasizes that teachers cannot share with students what they have never experienced for themselves.

Study participants not only practice teacher education differently but also feel different to others. Their role as Courage facilitators and teacher educators is clear in the way they are in the world – the way they speak and relate to others. They are gentle; they *feel* balanced and at ease. They feel warm in that they are approachable, and a sense of grace surrounds them. They feel cool in their composure, and a sense of calm surrounds them. When talking with them I feel their welcoming, their openness, their being present. It is as if they carry the space that is created in a Circle of Trust around with them.

**Summary of Theme 4** The Courage work has a life-changing influence on people who take part in it. When words like “home,” “belonging,” “amazement,” “relief,” and “safety” are used to describe an experience, that experience weaves deeply into the tapestry of one’s life story.

#### **Theme 5: Identity as a Factor in Receptivity to Spiritual Work**

##### **Joseph: the disconfirming case.**

In analyzing the data from the four participants I was struck by how Joseph’s depiction and portrait stood out from the cases of other participants. Particularly, I knew from what he said to me and the way I felt about him that Courage work does not hold the same place in his professional practice as it does for the rest of us. Lois, Alex, and Elizabeth each use Touchstones or ideas based on the Touchstones in their classes. All three of them mentioned “no fixing, no saving.” They all have used silence to engender the safe space, and Alex and Elizabeth use chimes to draw students together. They have made specific, intentional changes to their teaching practice that mirror the space created in Circles of Trust so that students can do some self-study within their programs.

Lois told me she had “evolved a little bit” from how she began incorporating reflective practices and safe space in her classes, from just putting the Touchstones ideas in her syllabi to posting them in the class each meeting and having students incorporate them into their work. She gave me the example of class discussions about difficulties her students were having using the “turn to wonder” Touchstone in their field placements. The turn to wonder Touchstone asks that students, when troubled, reserve judgment about teachers or administrators and instead consider alternative explanations or points of view. When Elizabeth reflected on how she initially brought reflective self-study to her students she recalled, “I was just wondering what I would do.” Now that she has a grasp of how and what to do to bring this work to preservice teachers, she told me, “In Courage it’s other people in the circle, and here in the class it’s other students [who listen deeply and respond to each other when prompted with questions like ‘What spoke to you?’].” Alex relayed that teaching her students how to respond with open and honest questions has been a natural fit in the classroom. She shared how the questions work for inner life as well as classroom practices such as building community and even reading and writing with children. Joseph told me he did not remember the principles and practices of the Courage work when I asked him which ones were key and what role, if any, they played in his teaching practice.

I first wanted not to see this. I had believed that if anyone would be incorporating ways to preserve the heart of the teacher into their teacher education practice, it would be this group of people. I could not figure why Joseph seemed fairly disconnected from the Courage work. The data did not sit well with me because he had facilitated my retreat

series and because I felt there was something, some message about the research questions I posed and about the project overall, that I needed to see clearly. There was some sticking point that would not allow me to move away from the discomfort; it was a burr in my sock throughout the months of immersion and incubation that would continually rub my foot and ask to be dealt with.

As I looked over the participant transcriptions again and again, hearing their voices in my head, seeing them sitting in front of me in my mind, feeling their presence, I questioned whether I was on the right track about Joseph's practice. I began to return to my early hunches, to an idea I knew was big in the original concept map I had drawn for the study: identity. The identity of the teacher educator was at work in these portraits.

The professional identity of teacher educators affects the transference of their beliefs (Davey, 2013; Ducharme, 1996; Korthagen, Kim, and Greene, 2013; Swennen, Jones, and Volman, 2010; Zeichner, 1995). The focus of this study is not to investigate the construction of teacher educator identity. The question, "Who is the self that teaches?" cannot be examined, however, without delving into concepts of identity.

***Professional identity of teacher educators: researcher as sub-identity.*** Swennen et al. (2010) presented four teacher educator sub-identities: teacher educators as school teachers, teacher educators as teachers in higher education, teacher educators as researchers, and teacher educators as teachers of teachers. Of the four participants, Joseph is a tenured faculty researcher with a long list of publications. Swennen et al. noted that "teacher educators who work in research-intensive universities in which being a researcher is one of their dominant sub-identities will have a contractual as well as

professional obligation to undertake research and to publish their results” (p. 141).

Ducharme (1996), in an analysis of RATE (Research About Teacher Education) Project reports, discussed the identity of teacher educators as researchers. Faculty did not wish to self-identify as teacher educators; they preferred to spend more time on scholarship in their disciplines. Wenger’s (1999) theory that identity was formed in a community of practice holds that what we practice is closely tied to identity. That is, identity is formed in the interplay between the individual and the group rather than in one sphere or the other, and with whom we identify is reflected in what we think and do. If teacher educators identify as researchers and do research, it follows that, as Davey (2013) wrote, “Teacher educators’ efforts to practice what they preach, and to achieve greater congruence between their espoused and enacted pedagogies, are attempts to reconcile apparently contradictory aspects of their professional identities” (p. 130).

Joseph himself mentioned his identity early in the first interview:

The Courage work and my teaching at the university are two different kinds of endeavors, and I think both are very, very valuable but the Courage work was something that I thought *I* needed to offer, if I could, to practicing teachers because I thought it took us in different directions and basically involved different kinds of educational professional development steps, different set of assumptions, different views of what it means to be together. But I still have enough of an academic identity that I have one leg firmly planted in the academic world and what it means to be a teacher at the university, which is distinct from what it means to be a facilitator in a program.



*Professional identity of teacher educators: context.* What can be determined from this study is that the extent to which one role, professor or facilitator, outweighs another can be a matter of context. Joseph and Lois teach at research universities, where matters of the teacher's heart may be situated across a wider gap than at the less research intensive university where Alex teaches or in the program that prepares Montessori teachers where Elizabeth practices. Joseph's university is a Tier 1 research school and he explicitly relayed, "I won't, I don't, create Circles of Trust in my classroom in higher education. That's not what we do; it's not what I do. If I operate at this university with those heart expectations that are in the Courage work, it wouldn't work." He qualified his comment: "I'm speaking as a member of a (pause), a uh... university research-based faculty, ok? So there's context that matter." In discussing his perception of the gap, he said, "In my world, there's a gap between the analytically and intellectually rigorous and the attentive and loving and caring. And so then the task in life has been to try to find ways, bridges, in those domains where it's possible to embody both."

Lois expressed her frustration with the lack of support she felt from the education department at her research university when she had organized a Courage event on campus. She told me, "My department head looked up Parker Palmer, and he said, 'Well he is legitimate, but, you know, we don't want to be on there as a co-sponsor. We can use the facility, and we'll help you let the money flow through our department.'" She explained that the lack of support is "subtle," and the difference is noticeable. "As a professor in teacher preparation, I feel not as highly respected as the people who are

making big grant money and who are in STEM education because that's what our college is known for."

***Personal identity.*** Elizabeth, Lois, and Alex are in different, i.e., non-research-focused, contexts. Still, they talked about the ways they have to or have had to "fit in" or "slip in" the self-study and inner work that they do with their students.

First, one of the principles of the Courage Circles of Trust is "inner work must be invitational." Alex specified, "My CTT program and my classroom teaching are really different things for me. They're getting closer, but they're still different. They have to be different because of the nature of the classroom not being totally invitational, and I'm in a position of power there." Elizabeth has included words in her course descriptions to indicate the type of course they are signing up for. She said, "I include words like 'individual reflection and study, experience, and community dialogue.' I have to learn [how] to be vulnerable because they didn't sign up for Courage Montessori. My idea was that students needed a microcosm of that safe space of being in a Courage circle, and I just knew it must be invitational." Lois also referred to her message to her students: "Of course I say, 'Now I'll invite you to read', which I say 'It's always invitation never invasion; it's not share or die', you know all that stuff and they do, not everybody, but a lot [of them share]."

Second, in addition to the invitational nature of the Courage work, there is the current focus on accreditation standards in teacher education programs just as there is a focus on Common Core standards in K-12. This puts an added squeeze on the time available for faculty to facilitate self-study, and they are pushed to find ways to tie it to work that is

attached to standards. Alex told me, “It’s been very difficult to integrate this into the school of education. It’s just not written in the *standards*. The courses I have written, developed, and work on are where I’ve been able to craft it, but I have to use a lot of other words and language.” Lois talked about the department data that are collected on accreditation standards, and she concluded, “Maybe in academia what we don’t want to do is allow any of this quote ‘spiritual’ or ‘hidden’ or ‘compassion’ or ‘dispositions’ [material into the curriculum] because we have created jobs for ourselves and a whole industry of teaching [where it shouldn’t appear].” Elizabeth talked about the universality of the inner work and the concepts and activities she employs in her classes that are common to other wisdom traditions, such as an aesthetically welcoming environment and responding to poetry. She offered, “I’m not saying I deliberately hid it, but it’s not upfront that this is Courage.”

Joseph explained, “A key part of the Courage work is that it’s invitational and it’s invitational in a particular type of way, and the culture and the norms at the university do not embody those practices so I can’t have them sign up for my classes and say, ‘Guess what? I’m inviting you to...’ That’s not invitational.” He sees the gap between Courage and university as too separate, too distinct, whereas the other participants have found ways to mesh the two.

It was difficult to discern Joseph’s beliefs. While he qualified his comments at times with references to context and his identity as a “university research-based faculty,” he referred to spirituality as “the ‘s’ word” because it can be such a touchy subject in education. “There certainly has been a spiritual tradition so I started incorporating that in

my coursework. Then there's this whole arena – the spiritual arena which I sometimes call 'the "s" word' because at certain times it's appropriate to raise and other times it's not – sometimes it raises flags." He talked about many of "those of the Courage ilk" being spiritually oriented, but when speaking about the tragic gap said:

There's another form of tragic-ness when no matter what I do, I find obstructions. Those obstructions strike me more when it's something that is key to my identity. But there, I know a number of teachers for whom teaching is good work. Or teaching is their profession. Then, ok, these obstacles come and then... but then there are a group of us for whom it's connected to our calling. And for those I think it's more fraught.

We were deep into conversation about spirituality in education when Joseph said:

So then the question seems to me that one has to ask themselves is that so, if we're dealing in a practice or an organization or an endeavor, or professional development that has a spiritual feel to it... is that in any way inimical to or in conflict with the prescription – so some people say – prescription against bringing religion into the public schools.

I conclude from these exchanges that Joseph separates spirituality from education, and Courage work, though important, is spiritual to him. Courage and spirituality are still a part of his personal identity, but his professional identity as researcher and his context in his particular university make him feel as though he has to choose, and he chooses researcher. He still tries to straddle the gap though, which is clear in this powerful testimony: "What I'm trying to do and be in the classroom is a person who is analytically

and intellectually rigorous and attentive and loving and caring. I try to be that teacher, that person.”

### **Summary of Theme 5**

It cannot be determined if Joseph’s professional identity, sub-identity as a researcher, or personal identity – particularly receptivity to spirituality – is at the root of the apparent mismatch between his beliefs and his practice or “soul and role.” I cannot be definitive in my conclusions. I explored these explanations because I felt that to be true to this study and to the resulting implications, I must address the disconfirming evidence. I could not get to an answer, but the mismatch question itself was critical in the way in which it re-directed the study toward the issue of identity.

### **Section Two: Synthesis**

In this section I will discuss the synthesis of the experience of the gap between the ideal and the real. Through analysis of the participant data, I arrived at understandings about the ways in which they experience the gap and these understandings are represented in the five themes. Due to the heuristic research design, the synthesis of their experience moved into another realm entirely. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) explain this feature of the design:

Heuristics encourages the researcher to go wide open and pursue an original path that has its origins within the self and that discovers its direction and meaning within the self. It does not aim to produce experts who learn the rules and mechanics of science; rather it guides human beings in the process of asking questions about phenomena that disturb and challenge their own existence. (p. 53)

During this dissertation, my existence was disturbed and challenged. The research design, as Douglass and Moustakas have described, is conducive to this process. In fact,

the heuristic design is only appropriate for questions that are suited to take researchers down existential paths. Only when the researcher and the participants are deeply connected to the questions and have intense experience with the phenomenon should the heuristic design be chosen. I am vitally connected to the gap between the ideal and the real in education in my daily work as a teacher. As I begin my 14<sup>th</sup> year teaching, I will watch new teachers enter their classrooms with idealism and passion and hope that they can sustain themselves and their heart as they face the challenges of standards and accountability in our high-needs school. As a beginning teacher educator, I wonder how to help preservice teachers prepare for that scenario.

The experience of the gap and how to navigate it have been long-standing questions for me that I began to address in the Courage to Teach retreat series I participated in when I was in my fourth year as a teacher. Through this heuristic research study, I came to an answer in the form of a Symbolic Growth Experience (Frick, 1983). The symbolic growth experience (SGE) became the synthesis of the research. I will explain the nature of such an experience, as described by Frick, and, through a personal narrative, the circumstances leading to and characteristics of my own experience.

**Symbolic Growth Experience** Frick, a humanistic psychologist, developed the concept of SGE, which he defines as: “the conscious, symbolic interpretation of immediate experience leading to heightened awareness and personal growth” (1983, p. 110). Frick refers to two “major dynamics of personality development” (p. 71) in SGE:

1. *Integration, order, and stability.* The individual seeks to create a self-consistent organization, to bring unity and completion to an incomplete structure. There is a need to achieve unity and order within the personality.
2. *Differentiation, change, and growth.* The human personality seeks to evolve and change, to discover and actualize new facets of being.

An additional feature of the SGE is its synchronistic nature. The experience is a meaningful coincidence that is a “special moment of opportunity for the creation of personal meaning out of the immediacy of experience” (Frick, 1983, p. 109).

**Symbolic Growth Experience of the Researcher** Heuristic research has contributed to discovery in the Symbolic Growth Experience area (Frick, 1983; Moustakas, 1990). Still, I had neither conceptualized nor internalized the concept of the SGE until I came through it. Symbolic growth occurs in an immediate moment, and I am able to identify that exact moment when and integration and growth occurred. However, the heuristic process I was in – the immersion and incubation cycles – make it so the process of development seems to stretch back to before the beginning of the research to pivotal life experiences that led to the study.

**Joseph.**

My life experience and self-dialogue as a service-oriented teacher (I teach with the whole heart and am Courage-inspired) led me to this research. The heart of the teacher, the teaching self, served as the focus of inquiry that Moustakas (1990) explains as a beginning process in heuristic research. My arrival at the research questions served as the initial engagement with the research. When I reached the proposal stage of this

study, I was poised to begin interviewing. I imagined that I would find out from the participants how to move heart-based practices into preservice teacher education, and I wanted to “get on with it”. I interviewed Joseph first, and the data was not what I had expected. When he talked about “the ‘s’ word,” though, I thought, “Yes! The ‘s’ word!” I felt the same reservations about Courage work and have always felt the need to explain to people that it is *spiritual*, not religious. As it is for Joseph, spirituality has always been an uncertain domain for me. When I interviewed the other participants I saw that they had no reservations about spirituality whatsoever. I knew that Joseph felt limited by his context, but I felt it was our personal identity that made us hold this work at arm’s length. There was a part of our identity that was not as receptive to “soul work” as others who participated in Courage work were.

**Fred.** Around the time of my proposal, I attended the Holistic Teaching and Learning Conference at Southern Oregon University. At the conference I attended a Core Reflection workshop with Dr. Fred Korthagen. Toward the end of the workshop, Fred coached me in my own reflection, and with his guidance I identified my core qualities as “softness,” “vulnerability,” and “strength from stillness.” This experience felt as if the earth had shifted, and I emerged from that work with a different self and different view about my place in the world. That experience was unlike Courage to Teach. It was not at all spiritual, but much like Courage, it offered associated feelings of safety and belonging and resulting changes.

**Elizabeth and Lois.** The interviews with Elizabeth and Lois touched me deeply. In our time together we were not in a Circle of Trust though it often felt that way. Rather



we were talking *about* the Circle of Trust. Of the four participants, they felt to me to be the most affected and attached to Palmer's work. Their hearts were visible; I felt I could put my hand right on them. The emotions connected with these interviews, with the stories we shared, became part of me more than part of the data for the study.

**Alex.** As I mentioned in her portrait in Chapter 4, I cannot name the reason why the time I spent with Alex had such a dramatic effect on me. I believe now it is because on top of the personal connection I felt with her and the stories she shared, she reiterated Parker Palmer's words in a way that I was able to comprehend so that I could internalize them for the first time. Maybe it was because at that moment I was still, *still*, on the edge of the gap and trying to pull it closed. I was adamant but I was begging for help as I made this plea:

*Me: I can't...the reason that I'm doing this...[stuttering] the reason I'm doing this dissertation is I can't, I can't [stuttering] I- I can't deal with those two principles. I had trouble from the beginning of the retreat series and since, with the paradox and the gap. I don't think I can't **accept** that gap, I can't, I just have, and that's my mental issue and personality and all those things. When I hear that you're doing what you're doing and other people are doing what they're doing and we still have schools where you're right-it's the justice issue and we have teachers who don't do the best they can do for students who are in those high-needs contexts. And I just get so frustrated and I want that gap to at least narrow, I want us to be doing those things and I can't understand what's taking so long for people to get that kids, that teachers need to do this for themselves, they need to be taught in a teacher education program or at least that needs to be developed for*

*them. It needs to be developed for them or taught to them so they can then take that into the classroom like you said so those kids have at least a safe space at school where they can be mindful, they can be kind to one another, they can do all of these things and we're bumping up against standards and all of that so that even if teachers know how to do that and value that, they're allowed time to do that b/c of the deep, deep, deep importance of it. So there is a paradox and there is a gap, and I, I hear that it won't be resolved but I just feel so much frustration around that b/c those are the kids and they are not experiencing justice in my mind. And I **cannot** tolerate that, that people can't get on board. I cannot deal with it.*

Here is how Alex responded to me:

*...the world's like that- we die, stuff dies, so that other stuff can be grown but the stuff's gotta die. That's tragic, it's horrible, but that's the way it is. And ...the principles and practices of this work the first time I've seen and witnessed how just thinking of the Touchstones themselves, I'm not responsible for you. I'm not gonna fix and save you, I'm not gonna trample on you, I'm gonna learn to respond with open and honest questions, even when I think you're saying or doing the worst things. Rather than, I'm gonna be pissed and mad at you, and I'm gonna be frustrated with you, not that I don't also get that way, but that if we can learn to do that in the situations where we feel the most frustrated and not wanting... then something else happens, like I don't know what it is, but something else happens that moves things along, and we may come to an understanding and they may move their practice or change things or listen to you or bring you in to work with them or by just being more of who you are. The idea of the*

*tragedy is that it'll never be, never be closed because the point of the tragic gap, the point of it is that... the ideal, all ideals are not ever gonna happen in reality...*

When Alex went on to talk about Palmer's life-giving and death-dealing ways of facing the gap, it was exactly as if she held up a mirror to me: I had been so passionate about protecting children and myself that I had been doing a lot of death-dealing in fighting everyone to teach in what I thought was the right way. "Death-dealing" (Palmer, 2009) refers to the more reactive, fight or flight, violent ways we behave "when we do not know what else to do with our suffering" (p. 4). When she mentioned Palmer's communities of congruence I felt a deep sadness that I had felt very alone in my battle. When she talked about social change through individual change, what we do in Circles of Trust, it was the synchronistic moment. I got it on my own, but I felt she had guided me there: *Symbolic Growth Experience: Rather than try to close or narrow the gap, I must enter into it. I must open my heart and live and work in a life-giving way; I cannot fix or save anyone. I must respond rather than react. All I can do is offer what I know and believe.*

There are marked characteristics of the symbolic growth experience that point to its credibility. Frick (1983) mentions this aspect of the SGE: "In a real sense, responding to this altered reality requires the use and understanding of a new 'language'" (p. 111). When Alex uttered the words "life-giving," "death-dealing," "tragic gap," "no fixing or saving," and "reality," though I had read them in Palmer's work, heard them many times from many people, and even spoken them myself, they became terms that I had now

internalized. I wondered and actively looked for other Buddhist-derived language that would suit a spiritual atheist educator sitting down in the gap.

### **Integration.**

Prior to embarking on this dissertation and this discussion with Alex, my Courage work and my teaching work were not fully integrated. Through this heuristic study and SGE they fully integrated, the growth was then able to occur and my personality achieved a profound change toward self-actualization. “The SGE, with its time-dimension integration, rescues us from a divided consciousness and a fragmentation of our experience” (Frick, 1990, p. 73).

As I headed back to Denver from California I knew I had changed personally and professionally. My identity had just taken a giant developmental leap. The gap took on a new meaning for me as the conflict around it seemed to shrink and “life-giving” became a term that was floating and bouncing in my head. Frick (1983) describes this integrating aspect: “As a highly *integrating* experience, the SGE creates a synthesis of many forces that are normally out of contact or in a state of conflict... For example there is a synthesis of life’s time dimensions, in which the past, present, and future are contained in one moment of experiencing” (p. 112). Not only had my Courage and teaching work come together, but much of my life felt integrated – certainly my life working with children. As in William Stafford’s (1998) poem, “The Way It Is,” our calling and vocation can be viewed as a “thread” that we hold tightly through change:

There’s a thread you follow. It goes among  
things that change. But it doesn’t change.  
People wonder about what you are pursuing.  
You have to explain about the thread.

But it is hard for others to see.  
While you hold it you can't get lost.  
Tragedies happen; people get hurt  
or die; and you suffer and get old.  
Nothing you can do can stop time's unfolding.  
You don't ever let go of the thread.

The Courage work strengthens the thread and is so deeply fulfilling that it fosters the desire to pass the thread to another and another until it becomes woven into a web of a connected community. This growth experience strengthened the thread and my hold on it. Frick describes the experience of one of the individuals he studied and used a statement I feel is indicative of the power of the SGE: “[It] altered her self-perceptions and redirected her life” (1983, p. 110).

### **Growth.**

The SGE was a highly emotional event. I felt raw. The shift in my identity was accompanied by feelings of lightness and freedom. At the same time, it was deeply painful. My “softness,” “vulnerability,” and “strength from stillness” were beginning to emerge in earnest. These core qualities living on a sheet of paper in Korthagen’s handwriting (to remind me, he said) would have to come off of my refrigerator and become a fuller part of me to move into the gap. I did not and still do not quite know this self. The pain comes from the loss of who I once was. I took strength in death-dealing and I protected myself and children with ferocity and sometimes violence. I equate Palmer’s “broken open heart” (2004, 2009) with this symbolic growth experience. He wrote, “Imagine that small, clenched fist of a heart ‘broken open’ into largeness of life, into greater capacity to hold one’s own and the world’s pain and joy” (2009, p. 6).

I knew that what I had come through was necessary; it had been missing from my life. I needed to grow but was not sure how. I have explored the mental, emotional, intellectual, and physical corners of myself but the spiritual dimension, aside from a deep connection with the natural world, had yet to unfold. Frick explains the second personality development dynamic this way:

The SGE also plays a *corrective role* in the life of the individual by ensuring that unhealthy trends or inharmonious developments receive attention through the medium of symbolic awareness. The SGE, therefore, provides an important correctional experience when one's life is out of balance or when the integrity of the personality system is threatened. (p. 113)

Palmer (2009) wrote about “becoming civilized, overcoming the tyranny of the primitive brain” (p. 2). “A responsive heart instead of a reactive brain” (p. 3) is, indeed, a way of becoming civilized, and the self-actualization aspect of the symbolic growth experience is apparent. Frick (1983) affirmed the idea that “The SGE necessitates a greater appreciation of the more profound possibilities within our experiences” (p. 111). These two quotes from Palmer speak to self-actualization, particular to the concept of suffering. Palmer writes, “We might make a life-giving contribution if we knew how to hold the tension... The only way to transform suffering into something life-giving is to enter into it so deeply that we learn what it has to teach us and come out on the other side” (2009, p. 11). He also writes, along the same lines, “Through those retreats I rediscovered a generosity of heart and developed a taste for suffering” (retreat participant, 2004, p. 183).

## **Conclusion**

As I continued through the phases of heuristic inquiry I repeatedly asked myself if I was in the right place, going in the right direction. How did I end up here? I knew the

information was useful in the ways I had hoped the study would be useful, but the route was completely off the map.

The themes were clear through heuristic research steps and qualitative analysis steps described in Chapter 3 and in the methodological reflection section of this chapter. The disconfirming case from evidence in Joseph's data was addressed through a discussion of identity. The issue of identity led me into my own identity development throughout this study and the symbolic growth experience as a synthesis of the work. I considered these assumptions (Rodgers and Scott, 2008; Davey, 2013) as I evaluated the symbolic growth experience:

- (1) identity forms in multiple contexts, including personal, social, political, historical;
- (2) it is formed in relationships with others and it involves emotions;
- (3) it evolves over time and it is not linear. It shifts and is unstable; and
- (4) it is storied, interpreted, and constructed.

I found all of these assumptions applied to the SGE. The contexts I have discussed are the sociopolitical context of being a teacher in a high-needs school, the personal background I bring to the study, the social context of Courage to Teach, and the social context of educators discussing this phenomenon. I have described the relationships and emotions within this SGE as well as the timeline over which it occurred. Finally, the narrative form tells the story of my interpretation of this experience.

The reason my SGE takes me further into the gap and far from a research university, the place where Joseph and I part ways, is personal identity. My personal identity is open and receptive to matters that are spiritual and match “soul and role.”

In Chapter Six I will provide the implications of personal identity in teacher education and recommendations for the education community.



## **Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations**

The overwhelming majority of faculty and students have the interpersonal and collective power to shape their classroom experiences... Who's stopping us? What imagined, habitual, or real barriers are preventing our educational communities from actualizing meaningful dialogues around spirit, purpose, and transformation? (Nepo, 2010, p. x)

### **Overview of the Study**

As a deeply relational teacher who was called to serve in high-needs elementary schools, I was extraordinarily well-prepared for that work. My teacher education program gave me the technical skills and perspective on my role as an educator, and my life circumstances gave me a strong, resilient spirit. I began my career in 2002 with all of the tools I needed, yet my heart took severe beatings as I suffered the “emotional labor” (Hochschild, 1983) of teaching. In my fourth year of teaching, *Courage to Teach*, a personal and professional renewal program for educators (<http://www.couragerenewal.org/courage-to-teach/>) helped me pick up the thread of my calling. Today, in the full swing of the era of standards and accountability, new teachers have the added pressures of high-stakes testing and teacher effectiveness evaluations. As a result, about half of new teachers in high-needs schools quit within their first three years in the classroom (Berry, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Nieto, 2003).

The attrition of new teachers is a problem that runs deeper than the surface issue of a workforce loss. Not only are students losing their teachers, but we should be concerned about teachers who come into the profession with an ideal purpose, prepared

to care for and make changes in the lives of students, and then are confronted with a reality that does not allow for them to work toward those goals.

For teachers today what matters is a focus on the external, observable and measureable factors of teaching (Diamond, 2010). Teachers are pushed to match each lesson, each word they speak to children, to a standard that can be found in the Common Core state standards. Lesson plans must be carefully crafted so that each instructional move is within the parameters of the standards. The daily pressure on teachers is enormous because there are competency checklists and rubrics on which they will be judged. Their every move and word will be matched to their students' scores. For all teachers, but particularly those in high-needs contexts, the pressures of standards, accountability, and adverse social factors make the work feel all the more impossible. At times there are students with physical needs to take care of, but more often there are social-emotional or mental health needs, which are far more complex and influential on teaching and learning (Berry, 2007; Day, 2004; Farkas & Johnson, 1996; Noddings, 2013).

Even without these factors, teaching is relational. There is an inner teacher, a self in the profession, as there is in other caring professions such as nursing and social work, that cannot be denied, and without the inner teacher, the work serves neither the person serving nor the person served. That is, the heart cannot be separated from the work. There is a match between the soul and the role (Palmer, 1998b, 2004), and when the person is called to do the work they often experience flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Korthagen, Kim, & Greene, 2013). This connection to the work can also be painful. The

work never stops; it never leaves the mind or the heart, and it becomes so personal that when the person does not feel successful they do not feel fulfilled. Even though teachers know test scores are not black and white determinants of their work (Kelchtermans, 2009), the ideal that a teacher has before and during their teacher education program is that they can make a difference in the lives of others, that they can contribute to their communities and society at large, that it will be important work. When they feel the full weight of the work, many cannot stay in the classroom long enough to burn out; rather, they are shocked out. “To be disillusioned after two or three years, or burned out after fifteen, does mean that the call – the vocation of teaching – is over. It means that the school is not designed to support the living that is teaching” (Heubner, 1987, p. 18). The reality, particularly in high-needs schools, is that teaching includes vast amounts of work beyond instruction. Some of that work involves laughter, fun, flow, and joy. Some of it involves crying, fear, uncertainty, and loss. The work involves the heart and soul.

The question has been asked of teacher education programs: what is being done to prepare teachers for these scenarios so they do not drop out of the profession (Korthagen, 2001, 2004; Lantieri, 2001; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006; Liston & Zeichner, 2011; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Michalec, 2013; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Tickle, 2001). Unfortunately, a similar situation is occurring at universities. Standards and accountability have shifted the focus of teacher education to making certain teachers are prepared to teach the content necessary to meet standards in the classroom so that students can demonstrate success on tests (Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), 2015, <http://caepnet.org>).

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of navigating the gap between the ideal and the real in the current education landscape with four teacher educators who are also Courage to Teach facilitators. This dissertation's purpose was to explore the ways in which their beliefs and intentions influence their teaching practices. The study is transformative in that new teachers who have developed inner awareness and a self who teaches (Palmer, 1998b) come to the job with more agency (Ayers, 2010; Day, 2000, 2004; Hargreaves, 2001; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Korthagen, 2001; Zembylas, 2003). In the current landscape of education, agency is critical. Within Palmer's conceptual framework of the gap between the ideal and the real, I have used concepts such as *heart, calling, passion, and vocation* to refer to the ideal that names the vision of teaching that preservice teachers possess. They have hope that they will make a difference. I used concepts such as *high-needs contexts, standards and accountability, high-stakes testing, and competency-based teacher evaluations* to name the reality new teachers face in the school context. This reality may lead to attrition (Farkas, 2000; Headden, 2014; Ingersoll, 2001). New teachers must be able to sustain themselves in this gap between what they imagined teaching would be and what it is. Teacher education is the potential bridge in offering some inner work in developing the heart of the teacher.

The words *spirit* and *spirituality* in this study refer to "a broader, deeper vision that takes us beyond ourselves and gives us and our actions a sense of worth in the context of community" (Lantieri, 2001, p. 24), but they are in no way connected to any religious dogma. The spirit, or heart of the teacher, is strengthened through *inner work*, also referred to as self-study or reflection.

The methodology used in this work was heuristic inquiry. The heuristic design is a branch of phenomenology that is distinguished by the inclusion of the persons in the phenomenon rather than a singular focus on the phenomenon itself. Heuristic research also involves a deep involvement of the self as researcher and a personal quest for meaning. The six phases of heuristic research are: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). Characteristic of qualitative research, there is a spiral that this project followed as immersion and incubation phases repeated throughout. Indwelling and focusing led to the last phase, creative synthesis, which appears as a narrative of my Symbolic Growth Experience (SGE) (Frick, 1983). The four teacher educators and I explored the experience of the gap between ideal and real through interviews and artifacts they shared with me. The participants were each given the interview transcriptions and the final portraits to validate my capture of their experience. In the end, it is the researcher who must make the final call in heuristic inquiry, for it is only the researcher who has moved through constant verification with the participants and the phases of the research from question formulation to creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). Still, stories people tell can become “living parables... testimonies that help us identify and examine challenges all of us face” (Dass & Gorman, 1985, p. xi). Chapter Four is a presentation of the four portraits with my reflections woven throughout as we co-constructed the meanings of the gap experience. Chapter Five provides the analysis of the emergent themes and a synthesis of meanings, themes, and connections.

### **Research questions and themes**

The central research question formulated from my experience and that guided this study was:

How do teacher education faculty who are influenced by Palmer's work as *Courage to Teach* facilitators experience the gap that exists between the ideal and the real in the current educational landscape?

The following sub-questions were developed to explore the research question:

1. What are their beliefs and intentions regarding the gap?
2. How do their beliefs and intentions inform their practice in preparing preservice teachers?

The questions were designed to find out what specific beliefs these teacher educators bring to their practice and what their practice looks like. The themes that emerged from the heuristic inquiry were:

1. Multifaceted Definitions of Ideal and Real
2. Teacher Education: The Ideal as a Diverse Network
3. The Gap as Tragic and *Permanent*
4. Courage Work Changes Your Way of Being in the World
5. Identity as a Factor in Receptivity to Spiritual Work

### **Theme 1: Multifaceted Definitions of Ideal and Real**

First, in answering questions about the gap between the ideal and the real, the participants see a gap but caution against what Palmer describes as “collapsing into one pole” (Palmer, 2009, p. 8). The common good, or simply the good, as exemplified in wisdom based traditions in a non-violent and connected society, is an ideal toward which

we can strive. They see the value in having standards and accountability for teachers but have reservations about the current emphasis on external aspects of teaching. There should be more a more holistic view of teachers and students in university and K-12 classroom education that includes the self, the spirit, and the social-emotional and relational aspects of teaching and learning. Lois summed the “productive tension” (Palmer, 2004) provoked by the gap this way:

It’s good to have standards and accountability. But we have to have both the real and ideal purposes so that they are committed to ethical and compassionate lives and it’s not just about being a worker or making money. We have to be able to make decisions for the common good and for each individual.

## **Theme 2: Teacher Education: The Ideal as a Diverse Network**

Second, although these teacher educators manage to work self-study and other ways of preserving the teacher’s heart of into their practice, they point to barriers to incorporating Courage to Teach work into traditional teacher education program structures. The reality of accreditation standards renders self-study work difficult to fit into coursework. The gaps between university programs and cooperating K-12 schools result in rifts in the education family that provide poor models of a supportive community for those entering the profession. The gap is due to practical concerns such as separate physical contexts and schedules, but there is a philosophical gap as well in the perceived separation between the theoretically-oriented university and practically-oriented school (Intrator & Kuntzman, 2006). A teacher education program structure that would better prepare preservice teachers would ally closely with the cooperating schools, resulting in a more connected and seamless preparation. It would also offer ways for students to explore various teaching scenarios and philosophies so that they could have a more

cosmopolitan experience (Liston, 2012) and could choose an orientation that best fits their professional identity. Elizabeth explained this diverse experience:

I think in teacher education we do students a service by exposing them to different kinds of environments. Teacher education programs must be aware of this deeper part of our calling. It would be valuable to have students observe different teaching scenarios like the work before the work— finding out more about who you are and different ways of teaching.

### **Theme 3: The Gap as Tragic and *Permanent***

Third, the gap that exists between the ideal and the real is not what I thought it was. It does exist, and it is tragic: until we can realize a teaching and learning practice that gives equal priority to all those in the relationship, students will suffer in ways that I have personally seen. They will suffer as we push forward in the name of standards, ignoring who they are and what they need beyond their test scores. The gap that I see each day, that new teachers experience, and that we all live as part of life between what is and what could be will never close. Even if we adopted a more holistic educational approach, education cannot solve all social problems despite that teachers are held accountable for society's ills on many fronts (Day, 2004; Fukuyama, 1999; Noddings, 2003, 2013). The gap that the participants experienced on different levels and in different areas of their lives as teacher educators was revealed to me as a permanent part of life. Especially in the field of education where we are working within a sociopolitical context (Day, 2004; Hargreaves, 2011; Liston & Zeichner, 2011; Noddings, 2013), the gap between what is and what should be, in Joseph's words, "*doesn't seem to be resolvable.*"



And as I learned from Joseph, Elizabeth, Lois, and Alex, it will never close – the gap is permanent.

#### **Theme 4: Courage Work Changes Your Way of Being in the World**

Fourth, the participants in this study have had Courage work-induced life changes. Their perspectives and practices in educating preservice teachers have demonstrated that their lives have become more intentional and more reflective. Their intentionality and reflection demonstrate the importance of inner work and its importance in a person's life. They have moved the following practices into their work with preservice teachers: silence as a space for reflection, the use of third things such as poems as a way of facilitating discussions, and the creation of safe space for discussion of issues that come to the fore in teaching. Beyond their teaching, people who have participated in Courage work become part of a “community of congruence...that can provide countercultural support” (Palmer, 2014, p. 33-34). The participants and I are linked together in mutual support and concern, and people in the Courage community feel that wholeness in one another.

#### **Theme 5: Identity as a Factor in Receptivity to Spiritual Work**

Finally, identity emerged strongly in this study as a result of a disconfirming case. Joseph shared examples throughout our conversations that aligned with the themes discussed above. He sees gaps in education between the ideal and the real in education but sees them inherent in the work and more varied in type. He tries to incorporate third things into his teaching practice in the form of essays or readings that evoke questions about teaching and learning that open discussions in which he can engage the group in

deep listening. The deep listening involves a safe space where people allow silence and can honor the perspectives of others without judging, fixing, or saving. Joseph is a supportive person in the community of congruence and has a sense of wonder about spiritual matters.

The disconfirming evidence that caused me to look deeper is that Joseph describes a division between his beliefs and practice. He believes in the importance of bringing self-study, reflection, and the heart of the teacher into the university program. He said:

The institutional life can divide us in different ways, and so this assertion and affirmation of wholeness of trying to find ways to take the razor edge of the intellect and combine it with the intuitions of the heart and the emotional realm, I think, are very, very rich, rich, gifts.

He did not include the word “spiritual” and in fact refers to “spiritual” as “the ‘s’ word.” He said the word “spiritual” sometimes raises flags but in the example above and throughout the interviews, Joseph uses the words “heart,” “calling,” and “emotional” when talking about his own beliefs and practices but never “the ‘s’ word.” At the same time, his practice at a Tier 1 research university is a context that must be considered, one that he mentioned in our discussion: “If I operate at this university with those heart expectations that are in the Courage work, it wouldn’t work.”

There are two facets of Joseph’s identity at work: his professional identity, or sub-identity as a researcher (Swennen, Jones, and Volman, 2010) in the context of a research-based university, and his personal identity. While it is not clear from the research, I feel strongly, intuitively, and tacitly (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Patton, 2002) that the two

facets are interrelated. Joseph's receptivity to spiritual work, a piece of his personal identity, is a factor in his ability and willingness to move his beliefs into practice.

### Synthesis

In work, it has always taken courage to follow a unique and individual path exactly, because making our own path takes us off the path, in directions that seem profoundly unsafe... The amusing part is that you can spend years preparing for the possibility of falling *off* the cliff and then find yourself suddenly *under* the cliff, approaching it from another equally terrifying direction. (Whyte, 2001, p. 35)

The synthesis of these themes and the background I bring to the study, this heuristically designed dissertation, and the preceding coursework included, led to a symbolic growth experience within me. This synthesis has been invaluable personally and professionally. It has produced an outcome that has implications for the wider education community.

I am a teacher with a strong ethic of service and a belief in relationships and community forming the foundation of teaching and learning. They led me to this work and the research questions regarding how to address the gap between the ideal and the real in preparing new teachers for work in the field. The subjective I's (Peshkin, 1998) that are present in this work are the child-I, the teacher-I, the professor-I, the Courage to Teach-I, and the community servant-I. All of these subjective I's learned through communities of congruence that the gap I (we) believed *must* be narrowed between what is and what should be is real and permanently open. Through heuristic inquiry, which puts the researcher on a path of self-searching and self-discovery, I experienced a symbolic growth experience. This SGE is characterized by integration and synthesis of "forces that were in a state of conflict" (Frick, 1983, p. 112). In this case, my strong

desire to close the gap and my “death-dealing” (Palmer, 2009, p. 3) ways of living and working were in conflict with my desire to serve communities of learners through love and spirit. I was reactive, combative, forceful, and violently determined to make people see that kids are suffering but should not be. I intuited that about myself but could not completely, objectively see myself in that way and the “death-dealing” characterization of that approach until the interview with Alex. She used Palmer’s words and guided me to see myself differently: I had to make an individual change to effect social change.

The symbolic growth experience is also characterized by the development of my identity toward self-actualization, a synchronistic event that was highly emotional. Palmer (2009) describes “the broken-open heart” in terms of becoming civilized, becoming responsive and life-giving, “overcoming the tyranny of the primitive brain” (p. 1). This broken-open heart is the core of oneself, open to a new capacity to hold the suffering of others. This broken-open heart is no longer heavy, but it is painful. I continue, off and on, to cry tears of joy but also loss as I trade one kind of strength for another. Fred Korthagen helped me to uncover my core qualities of “softness,” “vulnerability,” and “strength from stillness” as he coached me in Core Reflection. These life-giving qualities were not yet fully integrated into my behaviors (Korthagen, Kim, & Greene, 2013). After the SGE that occurred in the moments with Alex, I realized that those qualities have to become manifest. The symbolic growth experience was this:

*Rather than try to close or narrow the gap, I must enter into it. I must open my heart and live and work in a life-giving way; I cannot fix or save anyone. I must respond rather than react. All I can do is offer what I know and believe.* My Courage to Teach-I wanted

quiet, calm, happiness, change, and openness at the start of this study. Those things I have gained and those things I must share.

### **Implications**

“Parallels of private experience become the ground for common initiative. What’s been dealt with in solitude becomes the basis for solidarity” (Dass & Gorman, 1985, p. 164).

#### **Implications for Teacher Educators**

**Self-study/reflection.** The participants in this study try to incorporate inner work in their courses. They emphasize the importance of this work in preparing preservice teachers for the reality of a heavy emphasis on standards and content teaching. When new teachers are prepared with the technical skills and competencies being taught in programs today, they have nothing to fall back on when, as Alex noted, “They say, ‘I’m doing everything right and it’s not working’ and they quit.”

Students undergo a personal transformation as they become teachers (Korthagen, 2004) that involves identity development, and we should be asking beginning questions such as: Why is teaching important to you? How did you come to the decision to teach? The self-study process must go deep to be helpful in developing an inner strength that teachers can return to as a thread when they face the challenges of the school context. Liston and Zeichner (2011) point to the “bandwagon of reflective teaching” and indicate that “any thinking about teaching that teachers do” is not reflective teaching (p. 7). Rather, they list five qualifying key features:

- Examines, frames, and attempts to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice;

- Is aware of and questions the assumptions and values he or she brings to teaching;
- Is attentive to the institutional and cultural contexts in which he or she teaches;
- Takes part in curriculum development and is involved in school change efforts; and
- Takes responsibility for his or her own professional development (p. 6).

Korthagen (2001), reviewed varying concepts of reflection and concluded, “The fact that these differences originate in underlying views of what constitutes ‘good teaching’ reveals that any prescriptive statement about reflection is questionable, simply because the individual views on the aims of education are questionable” (p. 57). In teacher education, we must commit to reflection on the teacher self with the aim of strengthening that self to combat the forces that result in attrition.

**Modeling.** If students are going to engage in reflection and inner work, their professors must be models of that work (Diamond, 2010; Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar, & Placier, 1995; Michalec & Brower, 2012; Zeichner, 1995). The teacher educators in this study (Joseph to a lesser extent) brought the soul/role dialogue into the coursework through activities in which they themselves took part. They also live their lives in ways that suggest they are no longer divided. As with any other teaching practice, we must model ourselves to be what we desire students to learn. The safe space necessary for the work requires a level of trust that can only be achieved when everyone is involved.

### **Implications for Teacher Education Programs**

**Improve connections with K-12 schools.** Teacher education programs have a responsibility to make changes in ways that they work with schools. Being further from the front lines of teaching means the responsibility rests more heavily with universities in improving the partnership. The participants' experiences of the gap between university programs and cooperating schools in this study are not unique. In the interest of providing better, more fluid programs for students and in establishing a more developed, cohesive field, steps must be taken to eliminate barriers to collaboration.

**Advocate for a more comprehensive preparation.** It is important that students who are headed into classrooms to work with children are prepared according to accreditation standards so that they possess the technical skills required for the job, but now there is no room for anything else (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, and Bransford, 2005). It is vital that we also prepare them with the wisdom of their calling, their motivation from within that brought them to the work. We must provide, acknowledge, and advocate for space for *both* the importance of inner development *and* the development of teaching skills in learning how to teach.

One way to promote this both/and development is to identify teacher educators who are successful in living and teaching holistically. These teachers, like Elizabeth, Alex, and Lois, rather than “fitting in” or “squeezing in” or “working in” the important work of helping preservice teachers pursue self-study, can offer the work openly in a skillful manner that they can use as models and to teach other faculty. Alternatively, teacher education programs may choose to be cosmopolitan (Liston, 2012) in their approach and offer a spiritual orientation for students. Preparation can also be context-

specific (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014) so that the teachers who are headed into high-needs contexts get extra “doses” of self-study to sustain them when, as Lois described, “it’s too heavy to carry by yourself.”

### **Implications for School Districts and Schools**

**Improve connections with university programs.** School districts, being a step removed from the front lines of the work of teaching, must also make steps toward a better partnership with universities, if only to serve their own interests. They will get better teachers and keep them longer, if teachers are better prepared when they enter the district as an employees. (Day, Sammons, Kington, Gu, & Stobart, 2006). This will lower costs in terms of turnover. When new teachers arrive technically skilled but without the strength of identity and spirit to stay the course in the tornado that is teaching, attrition rises. If school districts are overwhelmed with the district-specific, in-service preparation of new employees, it is logical to receive those employees from their education program fully prepared as teachers. Thus, school districts have a responsibility to communicate to universities the challenges existing in their schools and arrange for collaboration between teachers, student teachers, and university faculty.

**Resist standardizing.** Students can only benefit from having stronger, more resilient educators teaching and caring for them. The urge to standardize and “rubricize” everything in education, however, must be resisted in the area of the heart of the teacher. When development of the heart of the teacher becomes part of teacher education, the current environment suggests that it will be subject to external, observable measurement and ultimately accountability. That urge must be resisted. Noddings (2012) wrote, “By



‘natural caring’ I mean a decent, respectful way of meeting and treating one another that is maintained by inclination, not by rules” (p. 119).

Schools and school leaders also will benefit greatly with less turnover when teachers come into their buildings and culture better prepared to cope with school contexts. Schools, and particularly their leaders, must ensure that new teachers are welcomed into a supportive community as they transition from teacher education to teaching. As more new teachers arrive with their hearts and identities affirmed, the potential is there for schools to become stronger and more stable, if teachers can remain in their jobs and not succumb to the pressures that lead to attrition (Brown, 2002).

### **Implications for Teachers**

For teachers, especially those in preparation programs or new to the job, the implications of this research are two-fold. First, they must consider the possibility that they will need support later (Noordhoff, 2012). They must be open to being inoculated against pressures they may not anticipate for their and their students’ benefit. They must dig in, preserve their heart, and hold onto the thread of their calling. The thread is what we return to when the weight is too heavy to carry. In their guidelines for teachers to “bridge the chasm” and “realize change toward professional capital”, Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) list “starting with yourself” and “being a mindful teacher” (p. 154). Being open to knowing the self who teaches and examining the inner life leads to more open teaching and a journey toward growth as a teacher (Dass & Gorman, 1985; Moustakas, 1966; Palmer 1998b, 2004). When teachers are strong in their personal and professional

identity, they possess agency for change: “Waiting for the lawmakers, the system, or the union to ‘get it right’ before we get it right is to wait a lifetime” (Ayers, 2010, p. 153).

Second, teachers must hold the tension in the gap between what is and what could be, between the real and the ideal, but must also care for the self who teaches. In some schools, the culture can be toxic and no teacher, even the mindful, can overcome the toxicity. The decision to leave one’s students is not easy, but being able to sustain spirit may be a matter of changing schools (Valtierra, 2013). In high-needs schools, teachers have to maintain perspective on the permanence of the gap. It is a fine line, working in the gap without being drawn irretrievably down into it. Many of the issues that classroom teachers face in high-needs schools are problems that cannot be solved by schools alone (Noddings, 2013), and individuals, however noble, cannot shoulder the burdens of the sociopolitical context. The more passionate and committed the teachers, the more likely they are to experience emotional exhaustion and burnout (Day, 2004; Hargreaves, 2011).

### **Implications for Policy/Reform**

The implications for education policy and reform efforts that arise from this study are large yet simple. Lois laid the issue bare when she said:

We say we want to prepare our students to have the dispositions to be leaders in their schools and advocates for democracy and social justice, we say that in our mission, but I don’t see it in every class across our programs. It needs to be clear that that’s what we believe in.

The same is true for K-12 education that adheres to Common Core standards. Twenty-first century skills are touted as critical for the development of students, but being able to collaborate with co-workers and engage in intellectual discourse in a university classroom requires self-knowledge and social-emotional skills. These college-and-career-ready skills have been given little to no role in public education. Policy makers must look more holistically at students in classrooms and what we are really trying to accomplish in education. What kind of education do we want? Eisner (1998) noted, “The real test of successful schooling is not what students do in school, but what they do outside of it” (p. 170).

If the goal of education is to prepare youth *both* academically *and* social-emotionally so that they can learn how to live among others as responsible, caring, happy people, we must have policies that reflect that goal. To have that kind of education, we need teachers who are prepared to teach that way. They must be ready and able to sustain themselves through the hard work of teaching, and they need time, encouragement, and support in that endeavor (Intrator, 2004). A shift to this type of teacher education will be costly at the front end; this work takes time and patience (Palmer, 2004) as well as trust in those who work in the field. Standards will not fit the inner dimensions of teacher development. “Simply put, we can’t dictate heart, legislate genuine caring, and we can’t hand out a teacher’s manual that scripts vitality.” (Intrator, 2002, p. xxxvi) The fruits of the effort will be worth the cost, if teachers stay with students and remain passionate about their work. To stop attrition and retain strong, new teachers, the revolving door, in which teachers who leave are replaced with whoever will show up and schools and

students just carry on through the shock of high turnover, must stop (Ingersoll, 2001; Lortie, 1975). An apt description of this situation is “the renting of souls” (Briskin, 1996, p. 154). “We cannot pursue prosperity at the cost of the whole person or the whole community” (p. 157).

### **Implications for Future Research**

**Capacity for self-study in preservice.** An important developmental issue in reflection and self-study arose in this study. Lois expressed this idea in a note she wrote to me between interview sessions: “One of the ideas that came to me was the “need” for curriculum development that addressed the dispositions of the Courage work and the need for it to be integrated in developmentally appropriate practices throughout the program[s]”. During the interview, she talked about whether or not preservice teachers were ready for the practice of self-study, Courage work in particular. Courage to Teach, it should be noted, is a renewal program for educators. In response to Kegan’s (1982) stage theory of identity development, however, Rodgers and Scott (2008) point to:

varying capacities of teachers to respond to the calls that they (1) become aware of their identities and the political, historical, and social forces that shape them; (2) assume agency, find their voice, and take authority to shape their own professional paths and identities. (p. 742)

This developmental capacity and the appropriateness of teaching practices in teacher education programs is an area for exploration. We know that young children can practice mindfulness, but when inner work is focused on personal and professional identity, to what extent can students in teacher education programs engage? Do age, identity, receptivity to spiritual/inner work, life and professional experiences, or other factors determine capacity and to what extent?

**Language and practice.** As evidenced in this dissertation, there is no clear language or terminology in use regarding the inner dimensions of teaching. The language used throughout this study is common to Courage participants and provides a convenient, consistent dialogue. Terms such as *calling, vocation, authenticity, presence, (core) self, personal/professional identity, soul, core qualities, reflection, self-study, spirit(uality), holism/holistic* are used in relationship to one another. The Circle of Trust, the Principles and Practices, and the Touchstones provide a structure within which the inner work can be fostered. There are other structures, such as Korthagen's onion model, but there is not yet an agreed-upon manner of speaking about or practicing this work.

If future research efforts strive to build a more solid conceptual understanding through established terms, the next step may be to establish common practices. In the current landscape of education, the evolution of research could lead to the standardization and "rubricizing" (mentioned above) of the teaching and learning of presence, soul, or heart. We must tread lightly in matters of the heart. We know when people are being authentic just as we know when they are not being "real" with us or we witness them acting in a divided way (Palmer, 2004) with others. If we put example behaviors on a checklist labeled "positive classroom culture" under the subheading "heart" and hand that checklist to a teacher observer/evaluator, we risk devaluing the soul/role connection. Can we develop a common language and a menu of common practices without the risk? Can we in some way insure the work against the risk, the way we hold souls in Courage work, as "a small bird in the palms of our two hands" (Palmer, 2004, p. 146)?

### **Closing Comment**

The symbolic growth experience that I came to through this research, influenced by Courage to Teach and Core Reflection, was significant and has redirected my life. I believe that if I had been given these types of spiritual and self-study opportunities in my teacher education program that called attention to my identity and purpose in being a teacher, I would not have had to wait so long to come to a healthy place of integrated spirit and open heart. My work in the world is to offer these opportunities to others.

## Afterword

Can society be changed at all? Is it remotely possible – not inevitable, certainly, perhaps not even likely – for people to come together freely, to imagine a more just and peaceful social order, to join hands, and organize for something better, and to win? Can we do anything? (Ayers, 2010, p. 165)

In asking these questions, the very questions I ask while staring into the gap, Ayers pushed the edges outward to where I feel we really need to look for the answers. In explaining the symbolic growth experience concept, Frick (1990) posed the question, why do we not hear of more people's SGEs and why do they not happen more often? His answer:

The answer, I believe, lies in a socialization process that limits our vision and effectively diminishes our capacity to explore and contact various "realities" possible within our experience and existence. It needs to be recognized that growing up in a highly pragmatic, technological and data-bound society has discouraged the development of our symbolic, intuitive, and imaginative resources. (pp. 77-78)

The same reference to our technological society and our immaturity in spiritual awareness and receptivity can be found in Elguin's (2004) idea about where we are in our human development: "We are in our teenage years as a species... we have a lot of bridging to do between the spiritual and the worldly, between the species mind and the species body" (p. 28-29). Fukuyama (1999) argued that the societal struggles we face were caused by the disruption of the social order as we moved into the information age. But, he wrote, the disruptions are cyclical:

There is a bright side too: social order, once disrupted, tends to get remade once again, and there are many indications that this is happening today. We can expect this to happen for a simple reason; human beings are by *nature* social creatures, whose most basic drives and instincts lead them to create moral rules that bind themselves together into communities... While the transition into an information society has disrupted social norms, a modern, high-tech society cannot get along without them and will face considerable incentives to produce them. (pp. 6-7)

To provide Ayers with a more definite answer, we must refer to Plato's allegory of the cave. Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2004) discuss the idea of what it is like to "shift the whole":

Difficulties of adjusting to a new reality... one that aligns much more with what we truly value... It can be hard suddenly finding ourselves outside the story that has organized our life up to that point. It's wonderful to be free but also terrifying. Outside the cave we don't yet have a new story that's clear enough, simple enough, and widely understood enough to serve a new community of thought. I think we are trapped between stories. (pp. 216-217)

If we can do anything, Dr. Ayers, I would say we can offer sunlight outside the cave, hold the thread, and patiently await the shift.



## References

- Ayers, W. (2010). *To teach: The journey of a teacher* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Berry, B. (2007). Recruiting and retaining quality teachers for high-needs schools: Insights from NBCT summits and other policy initiatives. Hillsborough, NC: Center for Teaching Quality. Retrieved from [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf\\_nationalstrategyforumreport.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf_nationalstrategyforumreport.pdf)
- Briskin, A. (1996). *The stirring of the soul in the workplace*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Brown, R. C. (2002). Taming our emotions: Tibetan meditation in teacher education. In J. P. Miller & Y. Nakagawa (Eds.), *Nurturing our wholeness: Perspectives on spirituality in education* (pp. 3-12). Brandon, VT: The Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). (2015). Retrieved from <http://caepnet.org>.
- Center for Courage and Renewal. (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.couragerenewal.org>
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Cook-Sather, A. (2006). Newly betwixt and between: Revising liminality in the context of a teacher preparation program. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 37(2), 110-127.

- Cutforth, N. J. (1999). Reconciling the moral and technical dimensions of teaching: Moving beyond notions of good and bad pedagogy. *Journal for a Just and Caring Education*, 5(4), 386-405.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Danielewicz, J. (2001). *Teaching selves: Identity, pedagogy, and teacher education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2011). Keeping good teachers: Why it matters, what leaders can do. In A. C. Ornstein, E. F. Pajak, & S. B. Ornstein (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in curriculum* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)(pp. 118-127). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Dass, R. & Gorman, P. (1985). *How can I help?: Reflections on service*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Davey, R. (2013). *The professional identity of teacher educators: Career on the cusp?* New York, NY: Routledge.
- Day, C. (2000). Teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Time to renew the vision. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, 6(1), 101-115. doi: 10.1080/135406000114771
- Day, C. (2002). School reform and transitions in teacher professionalism and identity. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37, 677-692.
- Day, C. (2004). *A passion for teaching*. New York, NY: Routledge-Falmer.
- Day, C. (2007). Committed for life? Variations in teachers' work, lives, and effectiveness. *Journal of Educational Change*, 9, 243-260. doi: 10.1007/s10833-007-9054-6

- Day, C., Sammons, P., Kington, A., Gu, Q., & Stobart, G. (2006). Methodological synergy in a national project: The VITAE story. *Evaluation and Research in Education, 19*(2), 102-125.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). Introduction. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research* (pp. 1-43). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Diamond, A. (2010). The evidence base for improving school outcomes by addressing the whole child and by addressing skills and attitudes, not just content. *Early Education and Development, 21*(5), 780-793. doi: [10.1080/10409289.2010.514522](https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2010.514522)
- Douglass, B., & Moustakas, C. E., (1985). Heuristic inquiry: The internal search to know. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 25*(3), 39-55.
- Ducharme, M. (1996). A study of teacher educators: Research from the USA. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 22*(1), 57-70.
- Eisner, E. (1991). *The enlightened eye: qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Elguin, D. (2004). Interviewed by Phipps, C. An evolutionary threshold: Calling on humanity's "double wisdom". In M. Seymour (Ed.). *Educating for Humanity: Rethinking the Purposes of Education* (pp. 23-31). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Farkas, S., Johnson, J., & Public Agenda Foundation, New York, NY (1996). Given the circumstances: Teachers talk about public education today. A report from public

agenda. Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse. Retrieved from:

<http://www.publicagenda.org/files/Given%20the%20Circumstances.pdf>

Farkas, S., Johnson, J., Foleno, T., & Public Agenda Foundation, New York, NY (2000).

A sense of calling: Who teaches and why. A report from public agenda.

Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse. Retrieved from:

[http://www.publicagenda.org/files/sense\\_of\\_calling.pdf](http://www.publicagenda.org/files/sense_of_calling.pdf)

Frick, W. B. (1983). The Symbolic Growth Experience. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 23(1), 108-125.

Frick, W.B. (1990). The Symbolic Growth Experience: A chronicle of heuristic inquiry and a quest for synthesis. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 30(1), 64-80.

Fukuyama, F. (1999). *The great disruption: Human nature and the reconstitution of social order*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Garrison, J. (1985). *Dewey and Eros: Wisdom and desire in the art of teaching*.

Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Guilfoyle, K., Hamilton, M. L., Pinnegar, S., & Placier, M. (1995). Becoming teachers of teachers: The paths of four beginners. In T. Russell & F. Korthagen (Eds.), *Teachers who teach teachers: Reflections on teacher education* (pp. 35-55).

London, UK: Falmer Press.

Greater Good Science Center (2015). Retrieved from <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu>

Gu, Q. & Hargreaves, A. (2007). Teachers' resilience: A necessary condition for effectiveness. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 1302-1316.

- Hammerness, K., Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (2005). How teachers learn and develop. In L. Darling-Hammond and J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world* (pp. 358-389). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hansen, D. T. (1999). Conceptions of teaching and their consequences. In M. Lang, J. Olson, H. Hansen, W. Bünder (Eds.), *Changing schools/changing practices: Perspectives on educational reform and teacher professionalism* (pp. 91-98). Louvain, Belgium: IPN & Garant Publishers.
- Hansen, D. T. (2001). *Exploring the moral heart of teaching: Toward a teacher's creed*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, A. (2001). The emotional geographies of teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 103(6), 1056-1080.
- Hargreaves, A. (2011). Getting burned. In A. A. Friedman & L. Reynolds (Eds.), *Burned in: Fueling the fire to teach* (pp. 19-25). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Haritos, C. (2004). Understanding teaching through the minds of teacher candidates: A curious blend of realism and idealism. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20, 637-654. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2004.06.005
- Headden, S. (2014). Beginners in the classroom: What the changing demographics of teaching mean for schools, students, and society. Retrieved from: [http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/beginners\\_in\\_classroom.pdf](http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/beginners_in_classroom.pdf)

- Heubner, D. (1987). The vocation of teaching. In F. S. Bolin & J. M. Falk (Eds.), *Teacher renewal: Professional lives, personal choices* (pp.17-29). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialisation of human feeling*. London, UK: University of California Press Ltd.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 499-534.
- Intrator, S. (2002). Introduction. In S. Intrator (Ed.), *Stories of the Courage to Teach: Honoring the teacher's heart* (pp. xxv-liv). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Intrator, S. M. (2004). Teachers: The heart of education. In M. Seymour (Ed.). *Educating for humanity: Rethinking the purposes of education* (pp. 60-65). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Intrator, S. & Kunzman, R. (2006). The person in the profession: Renewing teacher vitality through professional development. *The Educational Forum*, 71(1), 16-32.
- Intrator, S. & Kunzman, R. (2009). Grounded: practicing what we preach. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60(5), 512-519.
- Joyce, B. (1975). Conceptions of man and their implications for teacher education. In K. Ryan (Ed.), *Teacher education: The seventy-fourth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II* (pp. 111-145). Chicago, IL: National Society for the Study of Education.
- Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Kessler, R. (2000). *The soul of education: Helping students find connection, compassion, and character at school*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Kelchtermans, G. (2009). Who I am in how I teach is the message: self-understanding, vulnerability and reflection. *Teachers and Teaching, 15*(2), 257-272.
- Korthagen, F.A.J. (2015). Core Reflection Workshop.  
<http://www.sou.edu/education/holistic/preconference-workshop.html>
- Korthagen, F.A.J. (2001). *Linking practice and theory: The pedagogy of realistic teacher education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Korthagen, F.A.J. (2004). In search of the essence of a good teacher: Towards a more holistic approach in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*, 77-97.
- Korthagen, F.A.J., Kim, Y. M., & Greene, W. L. (2013). *Teaching and learning from within: A core reflection approach to quality and inspiration in education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lantieri, L. (2001). A vision of schools with spirit. *Religion and Education, 28*(1), 21-39.  
doi: 10.1080/15507394.2001.10012272
- Lantieri, L. (2008). *Building emotional intelligence: Techniques for cultivating inner strength in children*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.
- Liston, D. P. (2012). Reconsidering university-based teacher education. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue, 14*(1), 15-29.

- Liston, D., Whitcomb, J., & Borko, H. (2006). Too little or too much: Teacher preparation and the first years of teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education, 57*(4), 351-358.
- Liston, D. P. & Zeichner, K. M. (2011). *Reflective teaching: An introduction*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Matsko, K. K., & Hammerness, K. (2014). Unpacking the urban in urban teacher education: Making a case for context-specific preparation. *Journal of Teacher Education, 65*(2), 128-144.
- Michalec, P. (2013). Common core and inner core: Co-collaborators in teacher preparation. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue, 15*(2), 27-36.
- Michalec, P. & Brower, G. (2012). Soul and role dialogues in higher education: Healing the divided self. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, (130)*, 15-23. doi: 10.1002/tl.20014
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miller, R. (1999). Holistic education for an emerging culture. In S. Glazer (Ed.), *The heart of learning: Spirituality in education* (pp. 189-201). New York, NY: Penguin Putnam Inc.
- Miller, J. P. (2000). *Education and the soul: toward a spiritual curriculum*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.



- Miller, J. P. (2005). Introduction. In J. P. Miller, S. Karsten, D. Denton, D. Orr, & I. C. Kates (Eds.), *Holistic learning and spirituality in education: Breaking new ground* (pp. 1-6). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Moustakas, C. (1966). *The authentic teacher: Sensitivity and awareness in the classroom*. Cambridge, MA: Howard A. Doyle Publishing.
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Murdoch, I. (1992). *Metaphysics as a guide to morals*. New York, NY: The Penguin Group.
- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF). (2003). No dream denied: A pledge to America's children. Retrieved from [http://nctaf.org/wp-content/uploads/no-dream-denied\\_summary\\_report.pdf](http://nctaf.org/wp-content/uploads/no-dream-denied_summary_report.pdf)
- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF). (2007). The high cost of teacher turnover. Retrieved from <http://nctaf.org/wp-content/uploads/NCTAFCostofTeacherTurnoverpolicybrief.pdf>
- Nepo, M. (2010). Foreward. In Parker, P. & Zajonc, A., *The heart of higher education: A call to renewal* (pp. v-xii). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Nieto, S. (2003). *What keeps teachers going?* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Nieto, S. (2005). Qualities of caring and committed teachers. In S. Nieto (Ed.), *Why we teach* (pp.203-220). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, N. (2013). *Education and democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Noordhoff, K. (2012). The power of paradox in learning to teach. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, (130), 53-65. doi: 10.1002/tl.20014
- Orr, D. (2005). Minding the soul in education: Conceptualizing and teaching the whole person. In J. P. Miller, S. Karsten, D. Denton, D. Orr, & I. C. Kates (Eds.), *Holistic learning and spirituality in education: Breaking new ground* (pp. 87-99). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Palmer, P. (1998a). Evoking the spirit in public education. *Educational Leadership*, 56(4), 6-11.
- Palmer, P. (1998b). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Palmer, P. (2004). *A hidden wholeness: The journey toward an undivided life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Palmer, P. (2009). *The broken-open heart: Living with faith and hope in the tragic gap*. Retrieved from: <http://www.couragerenewal.org/PDFs/PJP-WeavingsArticle-Broken-OpenHeart.pdf>
- Palmer, P. & Zajonc, A. (2010). *The heart of higher education: A call to renewal*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Palmer, P. J. (2014). The movement way. In S. Z. Hare & M. Leboutillier (Eds.), *Let the beauty we love be what we do: Stories of living divided no more* (pp. 30-38). Pawleys Island, SC: Prose Press.
- PassageWorks: Engaged Teaching and Learning (2015). Retrieved from: <http://passageworks.org>

- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity—one's own. *Educational Researcher*, 17(7), 17- 21.
- Rodgers, C. R., & Scott, K. H. (2008). The development of the personal self and professional identity in learning to teach. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, D. J. McIntyre, & K. E. Demers (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts* (3rd ed.) (pp. 732-755). Hoboken, NJ: Taylor & Francis.
- Santoro, D. A. & Morehouse, L. (2011). Teaching's conscientious objectors: Principled leavers of high-poverty schools. *Teachers College Record*, 113(12), 2670-2704.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education & the social sciences* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Senge, P., Scharmer, C. O., Jaworski, J., & Flowers, B. S. (2004). *Presence: Human purpose and the field of the future*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Stafford, W. (1998). *The way it is: New and selected poems*. Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press.
- Swennen, A., Jones, K., & Volman, M. (2010). Teacher educators: Their identities, sub-identities and implications for professional development. *Professional Development in Education*, 36(1-2), 131-148. doi: 10.1080/19415250903457893
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Tickle, L. (2001). Professional qualities and teacher induction. *Journal of In-Service Education*, 27(1), 51-64. doi: 10.1080/13674580100200146
- Valtierra, K. M. (2013). Beyond survival to thrival: A narrative study of an urban teacher's career journey. Retrieved from <http://digitaldu.coalliance.org/fedora/repository/codu>: 67579.
- Weaver, L. & Wilding, M. (2013). *The five dimensions of engaged teaching: A practical guide for educators*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Wenger, E. (1999). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Whyte, D. (2001). *Crossing the Unknown Sea: Work as a pilgrimage of identity*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books.
- Wood, D. & Borg, T. (2010). The rocky road: The journey from classroom teacher to teacher educator. *Studying Teacher Education: A Journal of Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices*, 6(1), 17-28. doi: 10.1080/17425961003668914
- Zeichner, K. (1995). Reflections of a teacher educator working for social change. In T. Russell & F. Korthagen (Eds.), *Teachers who teach teachers: Reflections on teacher education* (pp. 11-25). London, UK: Falmer Press.
- Zembylas, M. (2003). Emotions and teacher identity: A poststructuralist perspective. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 9(3), 214-238.

## Principles of the Circle of Trust® Approach

**1 EVERYONE**  
has an inner teacher

**3** Inner work must be  
**INVITATIONAL**

**5** Appreciating  
**PARADOX**  
enriches our lives  
and helps us hold  
**GREATER COMPLEXITY**

**7 A HIDDEN WHOLENESS**  
**UNDERLIES OUR LIVES.**

**2 INNER WORK**  
requires **SOLITUDE**  
and **COMMUNITY**

**4** Our lives move in  
**CYCLES** like the  
**SEASONS**

**6** We live with greater  
**INTEGRITY**  
when we see ourselves  
**WHOLE**

## Practices of the Circle of Trust® Approach

- 1 CREATE SPACES THAT ARE OPEN** and hospitable, but resource-rich and charged with expectancy.
- 2 COMMIT TO NO FIXING,** advising, “saving” or correcting one another.
- 3 ASK HONEST, OPEN QUESTIONS** to “hear each other into speech.”
- 4 EXPLORE THE INTERSECTION** of the **UNIVERSAL STORIES** of human experience with the **PERSONAL STORIES** of our lives.
- 5 USE MULTIPLE MODES OF REFLECTION** so everyone can find his or her place and pace.
- 6 HONOR CONFIDENTIALITY.**



## Circle of Trust® Touchstones

### **Give and receive welcome.**

People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this circle we support each other's learning by giving and receiving hospitality.

### **Be present as fully as possible.**

Be here with your doubts, fears and failings as well as your convictions, joys and successes, your listening as well as your speaking.

### **What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand.**

This is not a "share or die" event! During this retreat, do whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Your soul knows your needs better than we do.

### **Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.**

Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth in a circle of trust does not mean interpreting, correcting or debating what others say. Speak from your center to the center of the circle, using "I" statements, trusting people to do their own sifting and winnowing.

### **No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.**

This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us in the "helping professions." But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher.

Example of Third Thing, "On Turning Ten" Billy Collins

On Turning Ten - Billy Collins  
from the Art of Drowning, University of Pittsburgh Press

The whole idea of it makes me feel  
like I'm coming down with something,  
something worse than any stomach ache  
or the headaches I get from reading in bad light --  
a kind of measles of the spirit,  
a mumps of the psyche,  
a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

Sauge  
Frank  
Trujillo

You tell me it is too early to be looking back,  
but that is because you have forgotten  
the perfect simplicity of being one  
and the beautiful complexity introduced by two.  
But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit.  
At four I was an Arabian wizard.  
I could make myself invisible  
by drinking a glass of milk a certain way.  
At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.

But now I am mostly at the window  
watching the late afternoon light.  
Back then it never fell so solemnly  
against the side of my tree house,  
and my bicycle never leaned against the garage  
as it does today,  
all the dark blue speed drained out of it.

This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself,  
as I walk through the universe in my sneakers.  
It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends,  
time to turn the first big number.  
It seems only yesterday I used to believe  
there was nothing under my skin but light.  
\* If you cut me I would shine. \*  
But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life,  
I skin my knees. I bleed.

Which weighs  
more -  
responsibility  
or  
regret

responsibility - diffused - serve  
community  
touch  
many  
What is more imp?  
How imp. is ed?  
How imp. is creating a life?



## Invitation to Participate

Dear Courage to Teach facilitators and friends,

I hope this note finds you well. My name is Eron Reed. I am a doctoral graduate student at the University of Denver and a past participant in the Courage to Teach seasonal retreat series. Dr. Paul Michalec and Dr. Dan Liston were the facilitators of the series and Paul has referred me to you to extend an invitation to participate in a research study I am conducting for my dissertation. The purpose of the study is to describe the beliefs and intentions that inform faculty in preparing pre-service teachers for their work in high-needs settings. In particular, I am looking to describe the phenomenon of how the space between the “ideal” and the “real” is experienced by teacher education faculty who have facilitated Courage to Teach work by Parker Palmer. The space between the “ideal” and the “real” I am defining as the gap between the beliefs and intentions of the faculty (and the concept of teaching pre-service candidates hold) and the current landscape of education, in particular teacher attrition in high-needs teaching settings for which they must prepare new teachers. I’m focusing on participants and facilitators of Courage to Teach because they tend to be highly reflective of their practice and in tune with the heart of teaching. The study design is heuristic inquiry, so I am reaching out to those who are willing to take part in interviewing and sharing artifacts as co-researchers.

Thank you in advance for considering this invitation and since I am seeking to engage a specific group of people, if there are other Courage to Teach folks you know who may be interested in participating I would be grateful for help in finding and speaking with them. I am searching for teacher education faculty who have facilitated CTT. My contact information is below.

Wishing you productive fall and winter seasons,  
Eron Reed  
[eron.reed@du.edu](mailto:eron.reed@du.edu)  
720-323-7853  
IRB id#679767-1

Appendix F  
Interview Guide Protocol

**Interview Guide Protocol**

In my research, I am seeking to understand the phenomenon of how teacher education faculty who are influenced by Parker Palmer's work as *Courage to Teach* facilitators experience the gap that exists between the ideal and the real in the current educational landscape. By "ideal" I refer to the more humanistic aspects of teaching that pre-service teachers envision upon entering teacher education programs such as heart, calling, moral purpose, developing student potential, love, relationships with kids, and classroom community. By the "real" I refer to the host of issues that were born of the standards and accountability movement such as high stakes testing, performance based evaluations and pay, teacher effectiveness, core competencies, and Common Core State Standards, and teacher attrition. In this interview, I wish for you to engage in a conversation with me as a co-researcher as you vividly and comprehensively describe the essence of that experience to the best of your ability. Please feel free to share anything you think is relevant and to express it in any form you feel is most appropriate, be it stories, examples, metaphors, or perhaps conversations with others. I will ask some guiding questions along the way to help in illuminating the gap and how it may manifest in practice. Do you have any questions as we begin?

1. Please reconstruct how you became involved in *Courage* work. What thoughts and feelings are connected with that recollection?
2. What *Courage to Teach* experiences, situations, or people are most vivid for you? What feelings accompany those recollections?
3. What are the key *Courage* practices and principles for you? What role, if any, do these fill in your teaching in higher education?
4. How do you describe your purpose as a professor in teacher education?
5. How do you define the terms ideal and real in the current landscape of education?
6. Parker Palmer refers to the gap between what is and what we know could be as a "tragic gap". Do you agree?
7. What beliefs and intentions do you bring to your teaching?
  - a. What feelings accompany those thoughts?
  - b. Can you give an example of how your beliefs and intentions inform your practice?

8. What goals and outcomes do you desire for your students as future teachers? How do you prioritize them?
9. How do you think your students perceive your teaching?
10. Describe the qualities of your ideal teacher education program. What feelings arise when thinking of that ideal?
11. What information did I fail to ask you about that is important to you, or what else would you like to add regarding the experience of teaching in the “tragic gap”?

Appendix G  
Consent to Participate

**Consent to Participate**

I am a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Denver. The purpose of this letter is to provide details about the study I am conducting and to request your permission to involve you in the study.

The purpose of the study is to explore the ways in which teacher educator faculty who are influenced by the work of Parker Palmer as *Courage to Teach* facilitators experience the gap between the “ideal” and the “real” in the current landscape of education. By “ideal” I refer to the more humanistic aspects of teaching that pre-service teachers envision upon entering teacher education programs such as heart, calling, moral purpose, developing student potential, love, relationships with kids, and classroom community. By the “real” I refer to the host of issues that were born of the standards and accountability movement such as high stakes testing, performance based evaluations and pay, teacher effectiveness, core competencies, and Common Core State Standards, and teacher attrition. Specifically, how do beliefs and intentions inform practice in preparing pre-service teachers?

- **Procedures.** The study design is heuristic inquiry. During a series of three\* open-ended interviews lasting sixty- to-ninety minutes each, I will explore with you as a co-researcher the essence of your experience of the gap between the ideal and the real in teacher preparation. You will have the opportunity to share your thoughts, feelings, and experiences that allow us to illuminate the vivid and comprehensive phenomenon of the gap as you experience it. The interviews will be audiotaped. (\*Given the culture of sharing and deep reflection characteristic of CTT, we may need only one or two interviews.)
- **Analysis of documents.** Along with interview transcriptions, you may wish to share logs, journals, *Courage to Teach* work, syllabi, students handouts, or other artifacts that help to show how *Courage to Teach* influences your practice.
- **Benefits.** The benefits of participating in this work are first, to add to the larger call the importance of the heart of the teacher and the development of resilience in teacher preparation. Second, in reflecting upon our work, we renew our personal and collective focus (on keeping the tension productive).
- **Risks.** There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in participating in this study. In the course of the research you will be reflecting upon your beliefs and intentions and your practice as an educator and in discussing these issues you may experience an emotional response that normally accompanies such reflection.
- **Confidentiality.** Information obtained during the course of this study will remain confidential. Audio files and transcripts will be kept in a locked box and only the researcher will have access to them. Within two years of completion of the study (scheduled to take place before September 7, 2015), the audio files of our interviews will be destroyed. The results of this research study may be published. To assure confidentiality, no information regarding your identity or institution will be reported without your express and explicit permission. Pseudonyms will

be used exclusively through the transcription, data analysis, and final writing stages of the dissertation.

- Participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for choosing not to participate in this study. There will also be no repercussions if at any time you choose to withdraw from the study. You will not receive any compensation for participation.

Every effort will be made to make your participation as a co-researcher in the study a positive experience. Should you have any questions about the study, please contact:

Eron Reed  
[eron.reed@gmail.com](mailto:eron.reed@gmail.com)  
720.323.7853

or

Paul Michalec (my dissertation advisor)  
[paul.michalec@du.edu](mailto:paul.michalec@du.edu)  
303.871.7952

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant or in the event of a research-related injury, please contact Emily Caldes, Research Compliance Manager, at [IRBAdmin@du.edu](mailto:IRBAdmin@du.edu) and 303-871-4052, University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

I am grateful for your support of this research in my effort to understand the phenomenon of navigating the gap between the ideal and the real in teacher preparation. I hope you find this worthwhile and exciting and consent to participate. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

I have read the attached information and understand the purpose of the study and its related benefits and risks. I understand that my information and identity will be kept confidential and locked with researcher access only and that information will be destroyed within two years after study completion. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. By signing this consent form I agree to participate and acknowledge that I was given a copy.

---

Print name

---

Signature

---

Date

Appendix H  
Contract Summary Forms

Contact Summary Form

type: in-person  
location: Joseph's office  
contact date: December 15, 2014 today's date: December 22, 2014

Main issues or themes that stood out: research university context different than CTT  
"container with certain design features", "to different kinds of endeavors", "one leg firmly planted in the academic world", "different views of what it means to be together",  
"I knew in my heart of hearts that it was limited in what I could offer and the Courage work offers something that was distinctly different and richer", "what it means to be a teacher at the university which is distinctly different from what it means to be a facilitator", "it wouldn't work"

*Identity as faculty member/educator v identity as father, facilitator, etc.  
Religious/spiritual tones with CTT, catholic background/upbringing  
"the 's' word" of spiritual topics,*

Summarized info:

Reconstruction: CTT is home, attentiveness, people getting through the "morass", vocab and ideas with circle of trust, etc.,

Purpose:

Definitions of real/ideal: whose def? class, gender, culturally based... obstacles to achieving vision, eros as ideal, which is part of being a teacher- so is the struggle (see love, despair)

Ideas about gap: not always tragic, just seems unsolvable  
Beliefs and intentions: "a person who is analytically and intellectually rigorous and attentive and loving and caring- I try to be that person, that teacher"

**Practice:** hear and listen to students, creating spaces for people to hear each other, texts that illuminate dilemmas in education world, no poetry ☺, "the readings that I give...trigger cognitive and emotional responses in readers"

**Goals and outcomes for students:**

**Student perceptions:**

**Ideal TEP:**

New or **remaining questions**: “emphasis on wholeness” in CTT (p. 5) & paradox = no real/ideal split? Or is paradox/gap to be lived in?



Contact Summary Form 2

type: in-person  
location: Joseph's office  
contact date: February 2, 2015 today's date: February 11, 2015

Main issues or themes that stood out: context matters in putting CTT into practice, spiritual orientation is one way of teaching and teacher education= there are others to explore (esp since school is "traditionally bound"), emotional/spiritual is suspect in our cultural= binary with reason and intellect, some discomfort with religion in CTT, circles= "become more human", THE GOOD THE GOOD THE GOOD (HUMANITY), systematic change but also individual change and group support can help, longitudinal support like DU fellows

TEP should teach cosmopolitan + school systems are TRADITIONAL

References: dwayne heubner, TM Luhrman- When God Talks Back, Jim Garrison - Eros, Karen Armstrong - religion is its practices, Murdock - the tentacles of self "the good", George Counts (?), Lisa Delpit, Sam Freedman, E.D. Hirsch (teaches), Michael Apple (mentor), Bob Moses

Practice: context

Goals and outcomes for students:

Student perceptions: good evals

Ideal TEP:

CASEL  
collab + acad,  
social,  
emot  
learning  
proposals  
1+2  
Hanson 2011  
Cosmopolitan orientation  
Humanist Agenda - diversity of orientations  
Great Books-style CTD 14(2012) vol 1  
p21-22

New or remaining questions: Is there constitutional division at TEP level in the spiritual angle? Yes- there is- think arts based. But an even bigger leap bringing it to say, DPS. I blew some interviewing issues here- he was answering my questions and I just jumped to the next without acknowledging p. 2 I should have said "So you're saying spiritual is just one type of teaching and you don't practice/push that type?" or something to follow up on what he shared.

Lisim + Zeichner 91

TE of The Social Conditions of Schooling:

p178 immediate reality of classrooms and larger social context in which that immediate reality is embedded

p160 "personally engaged but reasonably critical" to work successfully" = examine teachers' work conditions

p. 98-99-emotional/personal investment ...it has effect on personal + prof identity"

### Contact Summary Form

type: in-person

location: Elizabeth's office

contact date: 12-09-14    today's date: 12-14-14

Main issues or themes that stood out:

“Gratitude” and other CTT vocabulary clear in practice now as well as in general conversation. Called to Courage work, drawn to it. Teachers must go through this experience before they can pass it to students. Individual work within a community for kids and adults. Ideas are worldwide and based on humanity.

**Summarized info:**

Reconstruction: “This was my path”, “story before the story”, reminded me of Montessori class for adults, “got what I needed”, “saved from myself” *deep gratitude*

Purpose: to serve others on their journey, spiritual preparation of adults, soul/role match is key to sustaining excellence over time (dissertation),

Definitions of real/ideal: respect, contribution of each indiv., developmental needs of kids, real is not mal-intent

Ideas about gap: “there’s overlap: I want pilot to be able to fly”, narrowness of understanding- gaps are part of life and universal

Beliefs and intentions: creating a safe space/microcosm, invitational, everyone belongs- room at the table, intellectual not separate from the [spiritual], deep listening and radical hospitality, no fixing, walk journey with them, how we treat each other and what we share, prepare the environment *joy, gratitude, wonder*

Goals and outcomes for students: find ways to sustain, find community, don’t settle, keep learning, if it’s not a fit get out

Student perceptions: fairy godmother, grandmother, knowledgeable, caring

Ideal TEP: diverse group united under broad view, 2 years- longer, expose to advocacy, content/discussions/sharing/problem solving- we need to slow down *gratitude, deep joy, wonder, amazement, vibrancy, aliveness*

New or remaining questions:

Expand on connection between beliefs and practice in assisting spiritual development?  
How to make this work invitational with pre-service teachers?  
How to give experiences in TEP that teachers can pass on to students?  
What's "radical hospitality"?

### Contact Summary Form

type: in-person  
location: Elizabeth's office  
contact date: 01-20-15 today's date: 01-21-15

Main issues or themes that stood out:

"This work is countercultural in TEP" but cannot "turn face from it." A "paying it forward"- an experience over time with a group of people. Elizabeth has many examples of infusion (my word) where she has worked principles and practices into TEP. There is an admission of cooky-ness. Theme = "work in the world"- what is it, how to determine one's own. Might be outdoor ed or other "ways of being a teacher."

Summarized info: There are a wide variety of teaching scenarios that are possible for new teachers to experience their success and their "work in the world." The observation and mentoring experience is missing in TEP and so is the "countercultural" nature of identity and integrity that Elizabeth folds/fuses into syllabi, assignments, activities, e.g., letters, journals, poems, reflection, slowing down, memory box, collage, community dialogue, story telling, filed logo of call and beliefs, listening and welcome TSs, what spoke to you, etc.

Reconstruction:

Purpose:

Definitions of real/ideal:

Ideas about gap: "In the culture of standardized testing we define teaching as [technical] what we know is teaching is about experiences and relationships- we have to stop; it's not rewarding- it's got to feed us b/c it's a very difficult job - we might show up but we won't really be there."

Beliefs and intentions:

Goals and outcomes for students:

Student perceptions:

Ideal TEP: observing and sharing about different ways of being a teacher- Montessori, coaching, americorps, camps, etc etc and sharing strengths and challenges about each so that traditional isn't the only way learned

Contact Summary Form- Lois

type: in-person  
location: B hotel room  
contact date: 02-06-15 today's date: 02-08-15

Main issues or themes that stood out: spiritual not religious, belonging, safe space

Summarized info:

Reconstruction: attended many retreats and Cs of T before becoming facilitator- then went apprenticeship route versus fac prep- age? Experience?  
For the first time I began to see my life as a journey, a process of movement in a spiritual sense, of advancing from one state to another with my own internal compass, rather than a trip with success as the destination and the need for someone else's map. Seeing my life in terms beyond success and my career,

Purpose: sage/ guide/ "friend to the end"- teacher "*formation*", ready but not whole

(Key principles): open and honest, turn to wonder, safe space, third things, identity, reflection

Definitions of real/ideal: real comes from society, status quo, making workers, we need some standards. Ideal spiritual, compassion, personal= negotiation ☺

Ideas about gap: gap between schools and uni- they don't meet or speak same lang in "reward systems", gap in practice and preach in higher ed (don't work together and there is ranking, ie STEM, grant gatherers versus clinical teacher prep), gap when teachers hit job in urban and there is no support- they "fall"

Beliefs and intentions: love and care about ALL students, environment checking feelings and content, caring is not enough- must teach too

Goals and outcomes for students: (see purpose)

Student perceptions: "they know I care about them, they do"

Ideal TEP: CTT book with activities woven in throughout, standards so they can get a job but support community, better connect between schools and univ

Contact Summary Form

type: in-person  
location: Alex's home  
contact date: 05-19-15 today's date: 05-21-15

Main issues or themes that stood out:  
Pg 10-11: the gap truly is there and fighting it is futile. Change perspective- be open and honest, stay true to touchstones- it will not change in my lifetime- forcing and death dealing doesn't work. Individual change then bigger change through communities of congruence. Be true to self but learn a different way to approach the gap and do work in the gap and live with the tension. Sore head.

Summarized info:

Reconstruction: accidental somewhat- rec'd book, one retreat, funding, became facilitator ("which would not happen now") like coming home, belonging, weight lifted off shoulders, sense of community, I don't have to be frenetic, I don't have to fix everything - early connection with parker, marcy, rick

Purpose: to prepare thoughtful informed reflective practitioners who strive to develop each student to full capacity while recognizing dignity of each student, want them to know it's hard, want them to know hist of ed, how funding works, to see what could be by seeing different environments, by being able to stand up

(Key principles): no fixing/saving/advising, open honest questions, working those into seminars and activities with students and teaching their students- then paradox and tragic gap are overarching themes

Definitions of real/ideal: ideal is developing individuals, communities of learners paying attention to helping teachers and not expecting it to just happen b/c of all the decisions teachers have to make the work is hard. Children should love learning and see it as an opportunity, great experiences where they find things they are into, social emotional understanding. Ideal is stop seeing education as the only reason- there are lots of reasons kids don't learn (context)- we can't fight all social injustices *even if best ed sys*

EDIT

Ideas about gap: the gap will *never* ever be closed- we must be responsible for ourselves, life giving ways, not death-dealing, work on social change through indiv chg, develop communities of congruence by individuals living divided no more, be true to who you are

Beliefs and intentions: teachers are a powerful force in the world they can form or deform, p21-22 journal, third thing, courage like reflection, mindfulness, responsive

classroom, psych/child development and how children learn, open honest questions and taking all of that to children

Goals and outcomes for students: (see purpose)

Student perceptions: they like me, encouraging b/c I tell them it's hard, acknowledge the real. Sometimes my evals are lower on "intellectually challenging"- they don't ask about emotionally challenging

Ideal TEP: collaborative schools/good models where teachers are trained in the ideal as much as possible - too much disconnect between schools and univ, creating teachers who know bullshit when they see it and stand up to say no and stop it.

New or remaining questions:

*"A lot of teachers say they didn't learn anything in TEP" 19*  
*Intro.*