BEYOND DOWNLOADED ROUTINES: CORE REFLECTION AS A TOOL FOR ADDRESSING UNCERTAINTY

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Abstract: Drawing on positive and gestalt psychological frameworks, core reflection aims to empower teachers and students through a guided analysis of assets, obstacles, and ideals while also asking teacher candidates to reflect upon thoughts, feelings, and desires about their practice. In light of these intended outcomes, I explored the research question: How do student teachers experience core reflection? What I found was that student teachers experienced core reflection as a method to move beyond "downloading"—taking action without awareness—during moments of uncertainty. Additionally, student teachers seemed to use core reflection as a means to uncover, interrogate, and re-write the discourses they previously enacted during moments of uncertainty.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Purpose

My proper introduction to core reflection came at a workshop led by Fred Korthagen in late 2014. Though much of what I read about core reflection sounded promising, literature on it was still relatively limited since it had been proposed only a decade earlier. I still was unsure what it looked like in practice and, therefore, was unsure if its use with student teachers made for a worthy topic for research. Upon learning of Fred's workshop, I jumped at the chance to make the trek to the Pacific Northwest of the United States to learn more about core reflection.

I remained cautiously optimistic, albeit skeptical, through the early stages of the workshop. I still was not convinced I had seen enough to justify proposing core reflection as an area of study. This skepticism changed after observing one particular core reflection session between Fred and Erika (pseudonym), who was one of roughly a dozen workshop participants. I vividly recall Erika confronting a belief during core reflection that told her that much of her work had to fit into a "black or white" binary. Moving through the steps of core reflection, Fred asked Erika what she thought about this belief, what she felt about it, and whether or not she wanted it.

Through these and other steps of core reflection, Erika talked about how this belief had limited her and how it had limited her through much of her life. Yet, Erika did not know what to do about this limiting belief. I and others in attendance began to notice tears forming in Erika's eyes as she repeated the words, "I don't know what to do about it. I don't know." After taking some time to talk about the firmness of this belief, Fred remarked how it seemed her initial problem situation seemed to become an issue when "birds" whispered in Erika's ear that everything in her life needed to be either "black or white" and that there could be no "shades of grey." Fred then went on to advise her that while these "black and white birds" had served her

well at times, it was okay to "entertain areas of grey," particularly during those times when she encountered problem situations wherein which she felt stuck. He went on to say Erika had the choice whether to listen to these "birds" or to instead follow the strengths she had, such as vulnerability, softness, and strength from stillness. Confronted with this new possibility, Erika began to cry.

It was at this moment that I knew a dissertation topic was to be found in the ways student teachers experienced core reflection. With Erika's permission, I use her example to illustrate some of the more intriguing aspects of core reflection. Of particular interest to me was the moment of confrontation: a moment when Erika's limiting belief was uncovered, an alternative was presented, and the emotional response that was elicited through this process. Fred framed this limiting belief as a "bird" whispering in Erika's ear during moments of crisis and uncertainty.

At the time, I had recently taken a doctoral seminar that looked specifically at discourse and found this "bird" to have qualities similar to the ways discourse is framed, particularly the ways discourse commonly operates just outside of our awareness. Though I will say more about discourse in later chapters, in short, discourse can be one of the ways we make sense of our varied and shared social experiences. For Erika, the way she made sense of her experiences was to bracket them in "black and white" terms and, as Fred pointed out, this belief served her well in many arenas in life, but can be limiting at other times. I do not know enough about Erika's experiences to know the origins of her "black and white" belief, but what I witnessed called to mind beliefs student teachers have been known to adopt during their socialization into the profession. These beliefs tended to be reinforced and reproduced through the shared (albeit often

tacit) social discourse that takes place in schools and I was interested to see how student teachers experienced core reflection as a tool that has the potential to uncover these hidden discourses.

This incident also brought to mind my own student teaching experiences and my subsequent seven years teaching high school science. I still recall the feelings of insecurity stemming from not knowing what to do about problem situations I occasionally encountered. I remember spending many sleepless nights turning over situations in my mind, playing out different situations and pondering what I could have done differently, yet not knowing which scenario was the "right" one or how even to arrive at the "right" one.

Intrator (2006) suggested the "emotional drama" associated with uncertainty is common among student teachers. In my current role as a teacher educator, I echo his concerns when he asked more of teacher educators than that of intellectual repository of educational theory:

> What can we do to help our novice teachers negotiate the emotional drama that marks those first years of teaching? I believe we must find ways for our students to make sense of what is going on inside of them by providing time, structure, and approaches that invite intentional focus on how the inner landscapes of our life interact with the dense, tangled, and charged work of teaching. This involves cultivating discernment, encouraging self-exploration, and providing opportunity to discover where one's own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors come from and how one's actions in the world are shaped by the meanings attached to those beliefs. (p. 236)

Additionally, Intrator called upon teacher educators to extend their task beyond that of "sounding board" for student teacher feelings and the ways these feelings inform actions. He asked teacher educators to assist in uncovering and interpreting "how one's actions in the world are shaped by the meanings" which inform those thoughts, feelings, and actions. Based on what I witnessed

between Fred and Erika, core reflection may not only create a space for student teachers to articulate their thoughts, feelings, and actions regarding their practice, but may also allow teacher educators to coach teacher candidates in the work of uncovering, interpreting, and perhaps even interrogating the beliefs they hold (Korthagen & Evelein, 2015).

With these memories in mind, I sought to study the ways student teachers may experience core reflection. Drawing on positive (see Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000) and gestalt (see Kempler, 1973) psychological frameworks, core reflection aims to empower teachers and students through a guided analysis of assets, obstacles, and ideals while also asking teacher candidates to reflect upon their thoughts, feelings, and desires with respect to their practice (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). In light of these intended outcomes, I explored the research question: *How do student teachers experience core reflection?* What I found was that student teachers seemed to use core reflection primarily as one way to assist them in navigating the uncertainties inherent in teaching. More specifically, I found that core reflection seemed to be experienced as a tool for uncovering and interrogating the discourses these student teachers instinctively turned to during these times of uncertainty.

Why Study the Experience of Core Reflection?

Teacher practice is a one fraught with uncertainty (Britzman, 2007; Forzani, 2014; Sinner, 2012), a reality for which pre-service teachers must be prepared (Floden & Buchmann, 1993). Dotger (2015) contended that "uncertainty comes in two forms – from the visibility and accountability associated with one's professional responsibilities and from the realization that one's profession is full of situations where decisions are based on often-partial knowledge and actions are taken real-time" (p. 10). Yet, preparing pre-service teachers for this uncertainty seems to be seldom addressed by teacher education programs.

Confronting uncertainty can be a tense and dramatic experience for preservice teachers (Sinner, 2012). As Intrator (2006) explained, the "emotional drama" of uncertainty may come in multiple forms:

> The public scrutiny of standing in front of a classroom; the fear of not being liked and respected by students; the vulnerability that comes with the awareness of how students, administrators, and cooperating teachers constantly judge your performance, the anxiety that comes when you are teaching a subject where your own understanding is incomplete; or the discomfort that comes from having to make rapid-fire and uncertain decisions, whether in disciplining a student, correcting a student, asking a question, or adapting a lesson on the fly. (p. 235)

And yet, as Intrator also pointed out, these experiences are largely left to preservice teachers to sort out on their own.

In lieu of strategies to cope with uncertainty provided by teacher education, preservice teachers often turn to the example set by their cooperating teachers (see Rozelle and Wilson, 2012) or their memories from their own schooling experiences (see Lortie, 1975) to fill the gap. As a result, student teachers frequently bend towards their cooperating teacher's style of teaching (Hewson et al., 1999; Ross, 1988; Rozelle & Wilson, 2012; Winitsky et al., 1992). Stoughton (2007) observed that "there is a deep apprehension about [preservice teachers'] ability as inexperienced educators to perform successfully" in the eyes of their cooperating teacher and, as a result, these preservice teachers seek to copy their teacher's style as a way of coping with this uncertainty (p. 1025). Coping with uncertainty in this manner is troubling because the beliefs associated with more traditional ways of teaching often counter or even "wash away" theories learned during teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Loughran, 2006; Zeichner, 1981).

Perhaps even more troubling, the beliefs picked up from experiences in the field are often resistant to change (see McIntyre, 1996; Richardson, 1996).

How are teacher educators to intervene in the ways student teachers cope with and make sense of uncertainty? Floden and Buchman (1993) discussed preparing students for uncertainty in three ways. First, they argued for making preservice teachers aware that uncertainty will always be a part of teaching. Second, they suggested cautioning preservice teachers about the tendency to cope with this inevitability by resorting to "witless relativism," "positions of 'anything goes as long as you have a reason,'" or "nothing works, so why bother?" – all of which are positions which confuse uncertainty with anarchy (p. 378). Finally, they advocated the implementation of routines in the classroom while being mindful of the limits of routines.

Floden and Buchman stressed the importance of surfacing beliefs and assumptions associated with uncertainty as a means of achieving these three goals. They argued that

> preparing for uncertainties includes knowing both how and when to attempt their reduction. A great support for continuing learning is being generally alert to what (inconveniently) contradicts one's assumptions. While one may feel, for example, that eager discussions are to be prized, it is helpful to be on the lookout for contributions that suggest wild misunderstandings, or to call on quiet students, when that can be done in a tactful way. (p. 379)

Yet Floden and Buchman's stance does not seem to fully account for the persuasive power of discourse and the ways discourse informs beliefs, nor does it offer a helpful tool for how to go about surfacing the discourses and beliefs associated with uncertainty. Core reflection may be a tool that could serve both; this study sought to learn more about its utility in this endeavor.

In sum, much of what is learned in teacher education is washed away by the student teaching experience. This seems to be due, in part, to the ways student teachers cope with uncertainty in the classroom. Student teachers often reproduce their cooperating teacher's practices, as a means to address uncertainty while also garnering positive appraisal from their cooperating teacher. For this reason, teacher educators may wish to consider ways to coach student teachers to expand their conception of how to address uncertainty. If the research is any indication, it seems that without this kind of coaching, the lessons of teacher education may be forgotten during those moments of uncertainty where teacher candidates feel particularly called to act upon whichever discourses are most readily available to them.

Theoretical Background

Core reflection may enable an enhanced discursive understanding of the uncertainties preservice teachers navigate on a daily basis. It draws upon positive psychology, Gestalt psychology, and theories of mindfulness and presence (Korthagen & Evelein, 2015). Core reflection also uses the "Onion Model" (see Figure 1 below) as a framework to make explicit the various ways one's identity, beliefs, and behaviors interact and manifest in the surrounding environment. Using the onion model as a guide, core reflection becomes a dialogue between a coach and a participant (in this case a student teacher) regarding problems or inspiring situations they experience in the classroom.

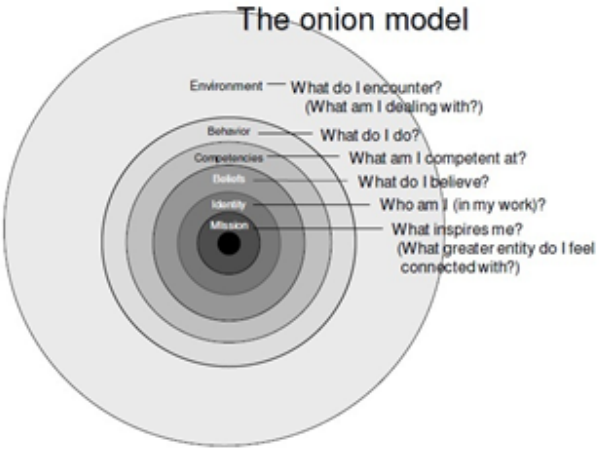

Figure 1: The Onion Model (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005)

Positive psychology informs core reflection by bringing strengths, or "core qualities," to the forefront. It posits that these "character strengths," such as courage, honesty, determination, hope, and trust can help in addressing problems (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In this way, the emphasis shifts from a deficit "problem orientation" to a "potential focused" or solution orientation (Seligman & Csickszentmihalyi, 2000). The actualization of strengths, as suggested by positive psychological theory, has been shown to assist in developing resilience (Luthans et al., 2007). Additionally, the emphasis on character strengths (i.e., "core qualities"), as applied through core reflection, resulted in teachers who "became more grounded…as problems arose…teachers more consistently summoned the awareness of their core strengths to restore flow and apply it to problematic situations" (Korthagen et al., 2013, p. 73).

Positive psychology, however, is not without its critics. The *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology* (2009) outlined several common criticisms of positive psychology, some more relevant to core reflection than others. Perhaps the most relevant criticism is that positive psychology is said to "focus too much on the individual person, rather than considering the impact of neighborhoods, social groups, organizations, and governments in shaping positive

behavior" (p. 9). In the interest of addressing this critique, those applying core reflection may wish to consider the ways in which core qualities are immersed and informed by social contexts and thus may wish to remind participants that these qualities are variable and mutable depending on one's biography and the context within which they teach.

Another criticism of positive psychology is that it is a "Pollyanna view that ignores the negative in life" (Lopez & Snynder, 2009, p. 10). Core reflection, however, addresses this criticism by placing importance on surfacing and addressing obstacles teachers encounter. The inclusion of gestalt psychological principles allows for such a discussion of those obstacles and the thoughts, feelings, and desires these obstacles may evoke. Gladding (2009) explained "gestaltists believe that human beings work for wholeness and completeness in life. Each person has a self-actualizing tendency that emerges through personal interaction with the environment and the beginning of self-awareness…Each person seeks to live integratively and productively, striving to coordinate the various parts of the person into a healthy, unified whole" (p. 214). As a more holistic method of reflection, participants discuss thoughts, feelings, and desires (i.e., what the participants want) through what core reflection metaphorically calls "the elevator." The metaphor of the elevator (see Figure 2 below) is used in core reflection to illustrate the effort to verbalize thoughts, feelings, and desires related to teaching. For core reflection to work at its full potential, Korthagen and Evelein (2015) contended "it is important that the elevator runs smoothly up and down past the three levels" (p. 41).

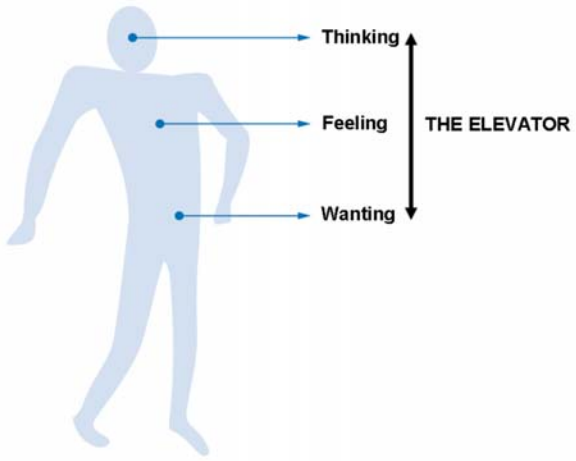

Figure 2: The Elevator (Korthagen & Evelein, 2015)

I can, however, imagine critiques of the ways in which Gestalt psychology is applied in core reflection, particularly with respect to how it is applied during the process of surfacing limiting beliefs encountered during reflection. Core reflection theory seems to propose that feelings are a response to an obstacle or limiting belief. For example, a participant might articulate a limiting belief such as "My cooperating teacher disapproves of my teaching style" while also admitting that they experience an obstacle of feeling afraid or worried when they teach. In this case, it would be appropriate for a coach to link these two together by telling the participant that the fear is not an obstacle, but instead a response to the limiting belief. Applying Gestalt psychology in this manner implies thoughts precede emotions. I suspect, however, that not all Gestalt psychologists may endorse such an application. Clearly more research is needed to determine the possible effects of this manner of applying Gestalt psychology.

Core reflection also couples Gestalt psychology's holistic approach with an emphasis on presence and mindfulness (i.e., focusing on the "here and now"). The aforementioned "elevator" helps focus a participant on each step of core reflection as an independent experience separate from other steps. Along with using the elevator, maintaining contact (i.e., "being present") with

each step means a participant envisions herself in the situation again. For example, envisioning the core qualities step would consist of a participant reliving a scenario where she can see herself using their qualities. Presence, in this example, means a participant makes note of her thoughts, feelings, and desires in the moments she draws upon core qualities. Korthagen and Vasalos (2009) made the case for staying "present" during core reflection by citing several researchers from a variety of disciplines:

> Senge et al. (2004) and Scharmer (2007) have made the concept of presence accessible for professional. Riva et al. (2009) define presence as the state of being in which you are completely, and with your full attention, present in the moment. Greene (1973, p. 162) calls it being "completely awake." Within the context of education, Noddings (1984) and Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) have emphasized the importance of presence for the teacher. (p. 149)

In a later publication, Korthagen and Evelein (2015) drew a distinction between presence and what they called "downloading":

> Presence and mindfulness are the direct opposites of taking action without awareness or of routine and automatic actions. We call the latter 'downloading.' It is a regular phenomenon in daily practice because what we do, feel, think, and want become automatic patterns (Barg, 1990; Bargh & Barndollar, 1996; Barg & Chartrand, 1999). (p. 149)

I contend that this study adds to and extends the theory behind core reflection by exploring the ways in which discourse inform the kinds of obstacles that are downloaded in uncertain moments. Later in this study I demonstrate some of the ways this type of downloading occurs. For now, however, I turn my attention to the process and practice of core reflection.

Core Reflection in Practice

Though core reflection is rooted in several theoretical traditions, this study situates itself primarily in practice. Due to this focus, this section, which borrows heavily from Evelein and Korthagen's *Practicing Core Reflection: Activities and Lessons for Teaching and Learning from Within* (2015), will discuss each step of core reflection and the transitions between each. Four primary steps comprise the practice of core reflection: statement of the problem situation; exploration of possible obstacles to achieving the ideal; discussion of core qualities; and statement of an ideal situation. These steps are not meant to imply core reflection moves in a sequential fashion. Often a coach and a participant negotiate moving through certain steps in recursive and non-linear ways to best address a participant's needs. To facilitate this more nonlinear approach, a coach may use placemats representing each of the categories and arrange them on the ground for a participant to step through as they move through the steps of core reflection (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Steps of Core Reflection (Korthagen & Evelein, 2015)

Generally, a participant initiates core reflection with a problem situation to discuss. To begin, a participant would stand on the "Problem Situation" placemat. Prior to a participant describing the problem, a coach would emphasize a few points: the problem ideally would be one that is current and that a participant wants to progress in; the problem should be described

concretely, but briefly; and an analysis of the problem should be avoided at this stage. For example, a participant might mention a problem involving a student who was disruptive during a lesson. Additionally, a coach would facilitate participant use of "the elevator" by asking questions which address the three levels (thoughts, feelings, and desires). To continue with the above example, these questions might include: What were you thinking when this student was being disruptive? How did you feel? What did you want to happen? How would it look if everything went perfectly? Discussion of these questions results in movement to the ideal placemat.

Once a participant moves to the "Ideal," the following questions are explored: What really is your ideal? How would this situation appear then? What would you think if this ideal was realized? What would you feel? If it turned out this way, is this an ideal that you would truly want? In my example, the participant might say that, in his ideal situation, he would pull the student aside after the disruption and patiently discuss the root of the situation with the student and this discussion would help ameliorate the problem. Following a discussion of the ideal, a coach facilitates a move towards the core qualities placemat by asking: What core qualities do you experience when imagining this ideal situation? What if you were to apply these qualities in your problematic situation? How would your experience of it change? In the above example, the participant might say, "I see myself being proactive, patient, and empathetic in this situation and using these qualities might help me keep the situation from escalating out of control next time."

Typically, by this point of the reflection, a participant generally feels optimistic about their ability to use their core qualities within the realm of this ideal and feels satisfied with the results of core reflection. Knowing this, a coach pushes the participant's thinking further by

asking: What is it that keeps you from reaching this ideal and using your core qualities? This question generally ends up moving a participant to the "Obstacle" sheet. Generally, a participant will initially discuss external obstacles, such as student behavior (e.g., "he never listens to me") or school practices (e.g., "the policy is to send disruptive kids to the office"). Using the elevator (i.e., reflecting on thoughts, feelings, and desires) will typically uncover internal obstacles, which are typically beliefs a participant holds towards these external obstacles. Often these beliefs will take the form of internal obstacles to the manifestation of core qualities (e.g., "I am worried what my cooperating teacher will think of me if I'm too patient or empathetic – maybe she will think I'm a 'pushover?'"). A coach and participant then explore the following types of questions: How would you summarize this limiting belief or behavior in one sentence? What do you think exactly when you are stuck in this limiting pattern or limiting belief? How does it make you feel to be stuck in this pattern? How do you relate to this obstacle? Do you feel you have a choice in how you relate to it?

After all steps have been experienced, the coach asks a participant to step away from the placemats to "look at the obstacle at a distance" (Korthagen & Evelein, 2015). "Looking at a distance" means assisting a participant to realize they have a choice to no longer be led by the internal obstacle (e.g., "What do you think about the choice between being worried about being a "pushover" versus using your core quality of empathy and patience?"). Realization of this choice is facilitated through questions such as: How would it be to not fight an internal obstacle, but also to not be dragged along by it anymore? Is it possible to, instead of staying stuck in the obstacle, feel as though you have a choice to no longer be obstructed by this limiting belief? Can you choose to realign yourself with your ideal and the core qualities you associate with it? Following these questions, a coach asks a participant: So do you feel how much you would like

to use these qualities to help you achieve your ideal, but you are blocking yourself with this limiting belief/behavior? How does it feel to do that?

Following this distancing from the obstacle, a coach directs a participant to move towards the core qualities placemat and asks questions such as: How could you apply these core qualities more and no longer be dragged into the obstacle? How would you feel? What would you get out of it? Do you really want this? Usually at this point a participant has some vague ideas on how he might apply his core qualities within the problem situation, but lacks concrete awareness of how to apply this outside the context of core reflection. To assist with bridging this gap, a coach conducts a "reality check." To facilitate the reality check, a coach asks: Imagine that this obstacle, "I worry that I might be a pushover," happens again: What will you do exactly? Would you like to act this out with me? Provided a participant feels comfortable doing this, a coach and participant conduct a role play of the problem situation. Rather than address every aspect of a situation, a coach instead attempts to act out the ways an obstacle manifests (e.g., a student testing the participant's patience and empathy) in order to give a participant a chance to practice his use of core qualities in the face of the obstacles he had articulated earlier in the reflection session.

This would generally end the core reflection session, but occasionally a participant encounters new obstacles through the role play and thus another round of core reflection may take place. Once the core reflection session comes to a conclusion, a participant is encouraged to use his core qualities the next time he encounters the problem situation. Future core reflection sessions, if necessary, could address new obstacles that arise within the context of a participant's problem situation.

One aspect of core reflection that deserves special attention is what Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) called "confrontation." This part of core reflection typically occurs when a coach uncovers limiting beliefs (i.e., internal obstacles) associated with the external obstacles, such as student behavior. Confrontation often results in the interrogation of the discourses that inform a participant's limiting beliefs, but, as a participant in this study said, it may also be experienced as a "stressful" event:

> A [coach] can use [confrontation] to help the teacher become aware of the tension between the ideal situation and limiting factor or factors. Any form of confrontation always needs some empathy, but this is even more important during the process of core reflection, in order to ensure that the [reflection] setting remains [one that is] experienced as safe and supportive. (p. 59)

One important aspect of core reflection that makes empathy more explicit is when a coach articulates their experience of the elevator (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and desires) within themselves during reflection (Korthagen & Evelein, 2015). For example, a coach might pepper her comments with phrases such as, "I'm thinking this might have been the part of the scenario that was hardest for you" or "I'm feeling right now how this might have been a really tense moment for you" or "I'm wanting to help you find a way to use your core qualities more when these types of things happen." Using the elevator in this way can assist in promoting the "safe and supportive" atmosphere core reflection depends upon (Korthagen & Evelein, 2015).

Summary

Much is still unknown about core reflection and how its various theoretical underpinnings coalesce into a helpful tool for teachers, teacher candidates, and teacher candidates. What has been learned has only been available in the English language over the last ten years. Though a

small amount of research has been done on its impact on student teachers (see King & Smith, 2013; Meijer, et al., 2013), there seems to be a gap in the literature as it relates to a targeted study on the research question: How do student teachers experience core reflection? Additionally, a gap also remains with respect to studying core reflection with a focus on the discourses preservice teachers consult during their student teaching experience and the ways core reflection may assist in addressing these. My research comprises another area of study which seeks to address this gap while also providing new insights to teacher educators who seek to use reflective and coaching practices with student teachers to help them navigate the uncertainty that is inherent in teaching.

Chapter 2: The Phenomena of Learning to Teach

To best understand some of the ways core reflection might be experienced by student teachers, I draw upon post-intentional phenomenology and its concept of what might be called overlapping "packets" of experience. These "packets" encircle the actual phenomena (because this study relies on speech and speech is only suggestive of phenomena and is not the phenomena itself) and this review seeks to explore what some of these pockets may contain with respect to the experience of student teaching. I describe post-intentional phenomenology in greater detail in Chapter 3, but I invoke it here because it will help us understand this review of the literature as an interrelated series of phenomena student teachers typically encounter while learning to teach.

The phenomena in question in this study is that of the lived experiences of teacher candidates as they learned to teach through the lens of core reflection. In this chapter, I will also consider the different kinds of discourse student teachers may turn to during uncertain moments. Broadly speaking, these discourses may inhabit three areas of teacher education: socialization, teacher learning, and evaluation of teaching. This study explores the various ways these discursive phenomenon intersect with core reflection phenomena. In this review of the literature, I will map out the discourses teacher candidates may grapple with during moments of uncertainty. This examination ultimately foreshadows the kinds of discourses that may be unearthed and addressed through core reflection.

Discourse

Discourses are subtle, but powerful. Discourses "consist of recurrent statements and wordings across texts" (Foucault, 1972). These together "mark out identifiable systems of meaning and fields of knowledge and belief (Kress, 1989b) that, in turn, are tied to ways of knowing, believing, and categorizing the world and modes of action" (Luke, 1995, p. 15).

Britzman (2003) discussed the ways in which discourses affect educators. Drawing on Bahktin's (1990) concept of "authoritative and internally persuasive discourses," Britzman distinguished external, environmental discourses from internal ones. Significant overlap exists between Britzman's terminology and the phenomena I explore in this study. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I use Britzman's conception of "authoritative and internally persuasive discourses" as a theoretical framework to describe the discursive phenomena student teachers may consult during moments of uncertainty.

Authoritative and Internally Persuasive Discourse

Britzman (2003) differentiated the two discourse types by first defining authoritative discourse as one which "demands allegiance, an a priori discourse within a variety of social contexts and partly determines our 'symbolic practices' or normative categories that organize and disorganize our perceptions." Internally persuasive discourses, conversely, "pulls one away from norms and admits a variety of contradictory social discourses" (p. 42). Sullivan and others (2009) extended this definition by defining authoritative discourse as "any discourse which can legitimately (from the participants' point of view) control and direct the discourse and the participants' actions without the participants questioning this control" (p. 330). Sullivan and others claimed that, "the authoritative word often (but not always!) depends on the social status of the speaker, his or her recognized experience, expertise and/or knowledge, or of an institution as an authority" though "it may also depend on a shared unquestionable tradition to be respected for its truth-claims more than on any intrinsic logic of the discourse" (p. 330).

I follow the majority of education researchers, such as Ball and Freedman (2004) and Wertsch (2002), in that I use the conceptual framework of internally persuasive discourse "to be an aspect of the inner self," which is "consistent with the Vygotskian explanation of

internalization" (Meacham, 2016, p. 2). In this way, internally persuasive discourse describes a space internal to authoritative discourse that is open to questioning (Sullivan et al., 2009). Thus internally persuasive discourses are typically encountered as that smaller cluster of beliefs that are open to interrogation within authoritative discourses. For example, in this study I found one participant who experienced an authoritative discourse, "I need to live up the standard set by my cooperating teacher" and an internally persuasive discourse, "I need to be the cool student teacher." The validity of the overall authoritative discourse of "living up to high standards" remain unquestioned, but the internally persuasive discourse of "I need to be cool" was the space questioned by core reflection within authoritative discourse. As I will show in subsequent chapters, internally persuasive discourses related to student teaching were often the ones that were modified or countered during core reflection. Authoritative discourses, however, while often uncovered, seemed more difficult to counter.

Modifying and Countering Discourse as Palimpsest

This study suggests core reflection has the potential to either modify pre-existing discourses or counter these pre-existing discourses with new discourses. I draw on Davies' (1993) metaphor of palimpsest to illustrate the process of altering or countering discourses:

> [Palimpsest] is a term to describe the way in which new writings on parchment were written over or around old writings that were not fully erased. One writing interrupts the other, momentarily overriding, intermingling with the other; the old writing influences the interpretation of the imposed new writing and the new influences the interpretation of the old. But both still stand, albeit partially erased and interrupted. New discourses do not simply replace the old as on a clean sheet. They generally interrupt one another,

> though they may also exist in parallel, remaining separate, undermining each other perhaps, but in an unexamined way. (p. 11)

This study found that student teachers, during moments of uncertainty, either turned to pre-existing internally persuasive and authoritative discourses or consulted with discourses informed by their core qualities. Core reflection encouraged participants to turn to core qualities in uncertain moments while simultaneously encouraging them to consider the meaning of these qualities in context (e.g., "What does it mean to use core qualities of patience and empathy with this particular disruptive student? How can I do this with this student?"). This second step of considering the meaning of the quality often surfaced at the "thinking level" of the elevator (e.g., "As I use my patient and empathetic qualities, I am thinking of how I am better able to notice the nonverbal communication this student is providing. I am now realizing I can help more by tuning in to what this student is thinking through using patience and empathy."). This "making sense" or "making meaning" of qualities in context is the point at which the qualities become, in my estimation, discursive. While core reflection may surface new discourses that alter or counter pre-existing discourses, new discourses, as the palimpsest metaphor suggests, do not fully erase these pre-existing discourses as much as overwrite and interrupt them. For this reason, I next turn to an examination of the various pre-existing discursive influences preservice teachers may draw upon during student teaching.

Discursive Phenomena

In this section I present some of the relevant discursive phenomena student teachers may encounter and turn to during uncertain moments. Not everything described here was encountered by the participants of this study, but what I present will give the reader an idea of the discursive phenomena available to teacher candidates. I will look at three categories of

phenomena that may enhance, inhibit, or inform discursive phenomena: teacher socialization, learning to teach, and evaluation. Student teachers may consult aspects of each of these categories during times of uncertainty. These categories overlap and are not mutually exclusive, but I will present them separately for the purposes of clarity and interpretation. I will also touch upon the ways core reflection may influence these discursive phenomena. I will begin by discussing some of the relevant research related to teacher socialization phenomena.

Teacher Socialization

The literature points to several ways socialization may influence discourse and vice versa. Perhaps foremost in the field is what Lortie (1975) and others called the "apprenticeship of observation." He noted that

> those who teach have normally had sixteen continuous years of contact with teachers and professors. American young people, in fact, see teachers at work much more than they see any other occupational group; we can estimate that the average student has spent 13,000 hours in direct contact…[and] it is usually a relationship which has consequences for the student and thus is invested with affect. (p. 61)

As a result of this "apprenticeship," pre-service teachers reflect upon their years as students and presume to know how teaching ought to be done. The ease of reading teachers during this apprenticeship lends a false expertise to those observing the profession and gives an impression that teaching is a relatively straightforward process and thus anyone can do it. This misconception feeds into a range of discourses, many of which are problematic. Perhaps most relevant to this study is the way discourse associated with socialization may present a misconception that the world in which educators work is deemed to already be established and thus unchangeable (Britzman, 2003).

The process of learning to teach is also rife with internally persuasive discourses, such as: each teacher must learn their own way; meaningful experiences are self-evident; and gaining experience in the classroom automatically produces teachers (Britzman, 2003). Informed by these sorts of discourses, beginning teachers often hold unrealistically optimistic beliefs and tend to naively believe that race, ethnicity, and gender are irrelevant in their classrooms (Richardson, 1996). In summation, discourses associated with socialization commonly result in teachers seeing what they want to see, whether that is with regards to deficit notions of student ability or what constitutes good pedagogy (Loughran, 2006). Perhaps unsurprisingly, all of this results in pre-service teachers learning, upon entering the field, that teaching is much more difficult than originally expected (Britzman, 2003).

Additionally, autobiography informs socialization related discourse, more so even than ideas gleaned from teacher education programs (Danielewicz, 2001; Richardson, 1996; Sleeter, 2008; Zeichner, 1981). These autobiographical experiences provide preexisting discourses from which pre-service teacher identities are built (Danielewicz, 2001; Graue, 2005). Often these discourses do not all "get along" and may create, for example, an intrapersonal "tug of war" between internally persuasive and authoritative discourses. For this reason pre-service teachers' identities are caught between traditions and change (Britzman, 2003). This identity struggle can often result in difficulty finding a connection between their standard methods of instruction and the students they encounter in their classrooms (Danielewicz, 2001). Frequently teacher candidates struggle with how to resolve this tension and may feel uncertain how to reconcile what they know from their biography versus what they encounter in the classroom.

Discourses drawing on socialization, particularly those that are internally persuasive, may result in nearly a quarter of teacher candidates believing they already know how to teach before

ever stepping into a teaching position (Knowles & Cole, 1996) and this can lead to a reproduction of many teaching practices that should otherwise be reconsidered or even discarded. Many in teacher education are aware of this problem and thus suggest preparing teachers to take an "inquiry stance" to interrogate school practices, thereby disrupting the reproductive results of socialization discourses (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Dewey, 1904; Sleeter, 2005). Cochran-Smith (2004), in particular, contended that an inquiry stance results in a "teaching against the grain [that seeks] to alter curricula [and] raise questions about common practices" (p. 25-26). She asserted that "to teach against the grain, teachers have to understand and work both within and around the culture of teaching and the politics of schooling at their particular schools and within the larger school systems and communities" (p. 28). Certainly teacher educators' advocacy for "teaching against the grain" comes from a space of good intentions, but it is not hard to imagine teacher candidates categorizing this approach as another kind of uncertainty to navigate. For example, my experience working with teacher candidates tells me they might ask: "What do I do to 'teach against the grain' and what might happen if I do this during my student teaching?"

Socialization, autobiography, and identity may be experienced in a variety of subtle ways during core reflection. Core reflection may provide tentative "first steps" in how to address the kinds of uncertainty raised in the preceding paragraphs. Most salient for participants, perhaps, are the obstacles they perceive in the classroom and the ways these obstacles seem to thwart usage of their character strengths (i.e., core qualities). These obstacles generally come in the form of real and imagined obstacles informed by discourses encountered during socialization (Corr, 2010). The behavior resulting from these obstacles often begins as protection against uncertainty, but over time become unconscious to the point where the behavior becomes almost

automatic (Confer et al., 2010). Katie, a participant described in Chapter 4, provided one such example when she described this behavior manifesting in her as "defaulting" to a "stern personality" when she believed her students were being "disrespectful." Korthagen and Evelein (2015) called this behavior "downloading" which is "taking action without awareness, or of routine and automatic actions" (p. 149). Regarding this phenomenon, Shön (1987) conjectured that teachers are inclined to "tackling situations from routine because of the constant pressure to act," regardless of whether or not these actions are effective (Korthagen & Evelein, 2015, p. 150). Core reflection seeks to uncover the discourses behind these automatic actions, while also suggesting new ways to approach the kinds of uncertain situations that may have otherwise resulted in "downloading."

Building Competencies and Practices

The literature on teacher learning challenges the maxim that "teachers are born not made" (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996). Yet scholars have found student teachers often subscribe to a series of interrelated "myths" that imply teaching is innate (Sugrue, 1997). Despite the fact that, historically speaking, many student teachers enter teaching believing they possess these innate skills (Book et al., 1983), they often are surprised to learn they do not yet have all of the skills necessary to teach and, as a result, suffer "praxis shock" (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Veenman, 1984) when their supposed innate talents for teaching prove inadequate during the kinds of uncertain situations every teacher encounters from time to time. In the face of these uncertainties, student teachers tend to bend towards their cooperating teacher's style of teaching (Hewson et al., 1999; Ross, 1988; Winitsky et al., 1992) and tend to draw on their cooperating teacher's methods of classroom control even when those methods run counter to the student

teacher's beliefs of what it means to foster a positive classroom environment (Rozelle and Wilson, 2012).

Some of the uncertainty surrounding teaching practices may be partly a result of debate among teacher educators regarding what skills teacher candidates should master prior to student teaching. Some involved in teacher preparation agree that the practice of teaching is largely innate and advocate that teachers forgo teacher education and focus solely on content knowledge. Others such as Shulman (1986) and Ball (2009) advocated for teacher education focused on helping teacher candidates learn to translate content knowledge, such as math or social studies, into a more digestible series of learning steps. Shulman (1986) called this pedagogical content knowledge. Ball (2009) explicated this concept as "a special amalgam of knowledge that links content and pedagogy" (p. 245). Another group of scholars asserted that acquiring pedagogical content knowledge is insufficient and argue that learning to teach is more of a process of acquiring a series of "bite sized moves" such as gaining student attention by "being direct and specific" during instruction (Green, 2010). Several other scholars, however, have critiqued this technical approach toward learning to teach. For example, Stoughton (2007) noted that "although most beginners are looking for 'practical things that will work in the short term as one of their main objectives is, understandably, to get order in order to teach' (McNally et al., 2005, p. 180), an overemphasis on 'tips' risks the absence of central principles to guide their practice" (p. 1026).

And yet another set of scholars call for a middle ground between learning "teaching moves" and learning about teaching theory. For example, Lampert (2010) argued that "initial teacher preparation must help novices learn how to do instruction, not just hear and talk about it; yet [within teacher education] there is often more emphasis on tools for practice than on practice

itself" (p. 23). Lampert's concerns echo a renewed interest among scholars for developing a teacher education curriculum centered upon "core practices" (see Dotger, 2015; McDonald et al., 2013). Rather than aiming teacher education curriculum towards the acquisition of knowledge on teaching (e.g., theories of learning) or "teaching tools," an emphasis on research-based core practices asks teacher candidates to master teaching practices such as "leading a class discussion" or "setting and maintaining expectations" (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman, 2013; Lampert et al., 2013). With so many different views on what teacher candidates should know to teach, it is little wonder that student teachers might feel uncertain regarding what exactly they need to know to teach.

Core reflection, conversely, starts from a ground of relative certainty. It posits an assets-based approach to learning, not dissimilar to what Gonzalez, Wyman, and O'Connor (2011) called a "funds of knowledge" style of teaching and learning. The funds of knowledge approach "began as a multi-layered counterdiscourse to hurtful conceptualizations about minoritized children and their families…[through] reconceptualiz[ing] communities from a strength-based perspective" (p. 481, 482). Such an approach turns away from deficit notions of "banking models of education" where knowledge is deposited in students. Core reflection in practice also shares a kinship with Freire's (1970/2000) problem posing model, as both models of learning presume the assets teachers and students bring with them to the classroom foster better learning than a top-down "telling" strategy. In core reflection, a coach does not tell a teacher candidate of the various problems perceived during student teaching, but instead asks a series of questions to present obstacles as problems to be addressed by a participant through drawing on their personal strengths.

Yet, scholars have found these methods are commonly misunderstood and/or misused by practitioners. For example, Oughton (2010) warned practitioners of the funds of knowledge approach to avoid the all too common practice of imposing their own cultural standpoint upon learners. Those using Freirian pedagogy have occasionally misapplied it in ways that mirror funds of knowledge. Bartlett (2005) found that teachers using a Freirian problem posing pedagogy sometimes held a "conviction that students' knowledge was penetrated, alienated, resulting in (essentially) false consciousness, and that therefore teachers needed to serve as the vanguard to lead students to a predetermined conclusion that served their 'real' interests" (p. 17). As a result, these practitioners may have steered participants towards conclusions that may or may not have represented the true intentions or goals of those participants.

Similarly, it is easy to see how similar kinds of misapplication could occur with core reflection. Core reflection, like funds of knowledge and Freirian approaches, face "difficulties of translating… key concepts—dialogue, a dialogical theory of knowledge, and egalitarian teacher-student relations—into practice" (Bartlett, 2005, p. 16). In both approaches, practioners may find themselves advocating for predetermined conclusions that may not match up with the lived reality of participants. Core reflection may suffer from a similar fate since it invites coaches to identify the core qualities of participants as they describe their ideal scenarios of teaching. It is not hard to imagine a coach misidentifying core qualities or even imposing an ideal upon a participant that does not accurately represent the participant's teaching potential or their goals for teaching.

Scholars arguing for greater implementation of core reflection, however, contend some of the best and most enduring lessons may occur when these assets, or core qualities, are used to their full potential to create flow (Korthagen, Greene, & Kim, 2013). To facilitate flow, core

reflection seeks to move a participant from the center of the Onion Model (see Figure 1 below), where core qualities reside, to the last layer (behavior) and beyond (the environment). Alignment of the layers, starting with the core qualities and ending with a participant's behaviors, results in a higher likelihood of flow. Drawing on Csickszentmihalyi's research (1990, 1997), Korthagen (2013) claimed, "When people are in flow, they learn easily and rapidly" (p. 25). Flow also influences others to be in flow (Bakker, 2005). This framing of flow has implications for teachers and students since a teacher in flow may inspire group flow in the classroom (Marotto, Roos & Victor, 2007). As an ethnography in South Africa demonstrated, teachers who experienced flow were better able to tap into their inner resources in way that helped maintain commitment to teaching in the face of adversity (Fritz & Smit, 2008). These studies suggest flow, or lack thereof, influences learning potential for both preservice teachers and their students. During this study, I kept in mind these types of competency based discourses as ones student teachers may turn to during moments of uncertainty.

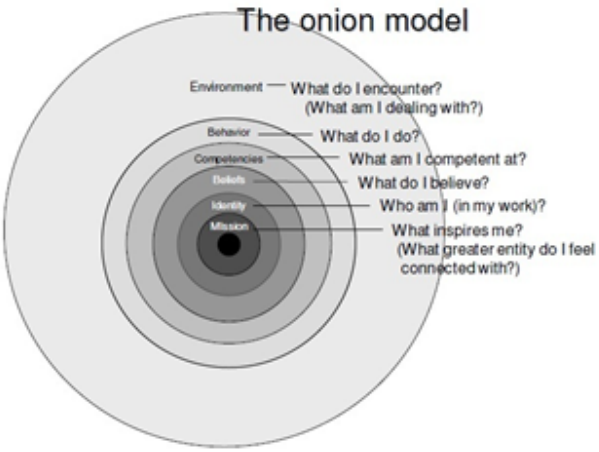

Figure 1: The Onion Model (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005)

Evaluation

As the achievement gap remains largely unchanged, policy makers have taken a familiar stance for many in education: teachers and teacher educators need to be held accountable

(Wilson & Youngs, 2005). Generally this accountability comes in a variety of forms (e.g., teacher testing), though the overarching assumption seems to be that standardizing teacher practices, both in terms of inputs (e.g., "scientifically proven" teacher training) and outputs (e.g., "objective" rubrics to evaluate teacher effectiveness), will be the panacea. Yet many also argued that a standardized approach does nothing but "codify teaching to the point of limiting its improvement" (Delandshere & Arens, 2001, p. 552). Despite this critique, Cochran-Smith (2004) observed that "teacher preparation is increasingly being conceptualized as a training and testing problem to ensure that all teachers have basic subject matter knowledge and the technical skills to work in schools devoted to bringing pupils' test scores to certain minimum thresholds" (p. 1). Teachers, both pre-service and in-service, often may feel a tension between following a standardized curriculum and serving an increasingly diverse student population (Sleeter, 2005; 2008) and may be uncertain about how to address this tension.

Additionally, many within teacher education are also calling for standardizing the assessment of teacher candidates. These advocates stress the importance of such an assessment to legitimatize teaching as a profession on par with medical doctors and lawyers, each of whom are required to pass a high-stakes exam to enter their respective fields (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2013). This advocacy has led to the development of the standardized performance assessment edTPA, currently being piloted or implemented by dozens of teacher education programs across the United States. Aligned with Common Core Standards, edTPA was designed to center student learning within a cycle of planning, instruction, and assessment, with an emphasis on using data to inform instruction (Sato, 2014). EdTPA "was developed – and is guided – by a consortium of professional educators" and is often administered and scored by

Pearson, a private corporation which also administers and scores high stakes tests across several other fields and disciplines (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2013, p. 4).

Critics of edTPA argue it narrows teaching and learning, distracts from social justice education, corporatizes teacher education, and restricts academic freedom (Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013). In response to Darling-Hammond's advocacy of edTPA on the grounds of professionalizing teaching, Au (2013) maintained that "teaching is already a profession, one that requires incredible amounts of expertise combined with equal amounts of courage, drive, and passion" (p. 4). Madeloni and Gorlewski (2013) also argued against the premise of standardizing teacher assessment, stating, "We do not need more technocratic efficiency, simulated objectivity or corporate incursions" (p. 5).

As a counter to standardized assessments, several scholars have called for a more personal and hands-on approach to evaluation through direct supervision rather than relying on impersonal evaluations by outsiders. According to this model, a supervisor, preferably a teacher educator, would be the primary bridge between a cooperating teacher, a pre-service teacher, and the teacher education program. The rationale behind this is that "the effective supervisor will adapt his or her supervisory [and evaluative] style in response to the degree of self-directed readiness exhibited by the [pre-service] teacher in a given context" (Glickman et al., 2010, p. 53). In this type of assessment, the supervisor, coach, and pre-service teacher conduct a collaborative, reflective dialogue following classroom visits, focusing on:

a) Building on the fact that change is intrapersonal – it comes from within
b) Focusing on the use of intrinsic motivational strategies that honor the teacher and his or her decisions versus telling the teacher what to do
c) Recognizing the teacher's level of experience and readiness for self-direction

d) Engaging in dialogue that moves the teacher to self-analysis
e) Encouraging collegial interactions and enables educators to learn together in an interdependent way. (Downey, 2008, p. 9)

According to Glickman and others (2010) and Downey (2008), the only way to achieve this reflective dialogue is to maintain a supreme level of flexibility: meeting the pre-service teacher where she is developmentally and working from there. The supervisor and coach will most often need to be cognizant of the ramifications of their interpretation of instructional decisions within the classroom. As Glickman and others (2010) argued, "Observation should be an entry point for the coach-student-supervisor dialogue and co-interpretation during a post observation conference. Interpretation of what observation data means is a construction and in most cases, [is] best co-constructed with the teacher[s]" (p. 256). Presumably, under this more personalized style of assessment, this developmental model would be the ideal type of supervision and evaluation conducted by cooperating teachers and university supervisors.

Other scholars have advocated alternate idiosyncratic approaches to assessment such as portfolio or self-assessment. Mansvelder-Longayroux and others (2007) argued for the portfolio as an appropriate response to performance based assessment. According to its supporters, portfolios can provide an acceptable compromise between those who support standards and those wishing for greater flexibility (Delandshere & Petrosky, 2004). Still other scholars, such as McVarish and Milne (2013), advocated a more idiosyncratic approach to evaluation, which they called teacher self-assessment. They argued that "self-assessment and self-evaluation afford students opportunities to more fully present their learning than would be possible with other forms of summative evaluation" (p. 9). Milne and McVarish went on to suggest that the metacognition necessary to think about one's socialization, learning, and evaluation is either too

abstract, intimidating, or confusing for many students due to the fact that they have yet to "learn how to reflect" (p. 33). All of these more idiosyncratic approaches seem to imply that the teacher candidate is ultimately the one who will assess their own effectiveness and that teacher education should prepare candidates for this reality.

In sum, as is the case with the learning of competencies and practices, teacher candidates receive mixed messages about how their teaching will be or should be formally assessed and thus may retain feelings of uncertainty regarding which areas are the most essential to their development. Core reflection, however, retains a sort of pragmatism towards assessment. Those experiencing core reflection evaluate their own learning through asking themselves, "Is my new behavior bringing about the results that I want?" Before actually implementing an assets-based approach towards teaching, a coach and participant conduct a "reality check" role play (see Chapter 1) at the end of core reflection to assess the feasibility of what was discussed during core reflection. No literature exists on this specific aspect of core reflection, though scholars such as Dotger (2015) have shown that teaching simulations, when implemented in a robust manner, can have its merits. Additionally, participatory theater, which allows actors and spectators to role play in an equal and collaborative manner, provides another approximation to role play. Smith and Webb (2011) described the transformative power of role-playing in participatory theater as one which "transports" participants to a "realm where they can see alternative solutions to their own conflicts" (p. 78). Participatory theater has been used to facilitate positive change, ranging from peacemaking in rural areas in Rwanda (see Smith and Webb, 2011) to increasing awareness of strategies to address bullying in a Midwestern U.S. high school (see Dennis, 2009).

Techniques such as participatory theater are not without their criticisms and one can imagine how critiques of core reflection might emerge that mirror the practice of these types of

conceptual frameworks. For example, Snyder-Young (2011) outlined some of the challenges of using participatory theater in an urban charter school, particularly the challenge of not "colonizing the workshop with [her] own privileged agenda" by intervening when she heard problematic assumptions. The role-play element of core reflection may suffer a similar fate if a coach is not mindful of the ways in which they may "colonize" the direction of the role-play. It is important that a coach embody the obstacle while simultaneously encouraging a participant to act out core qualities in any kind of way they may see these core qualities manifesting.

Summary

Core reflection is one of a variety of reflective models. Some types of reflection have more prescriptive steps while others rely more on what might be called "intuition" to guide their implementation (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Hatton and Smith (1995) advocated a particular reflective framework that considers reflection in action (made up of contextualization of multiple viewpoints); reflection on action (made up of critical, dialogic, and descriptive); and technical rationality (made up of technical decisions). Their typology of reflection primarily centers upon technical reflection associated with behaviors "in and on action." Though this is a common approach to reflection, it does not contribute to sustainable impact upon a teacher's practice (Hoekstra et al., 2007; Mansvelder-Longayroux et al., 2007). Additionally, as Milne and McVarish (2013) suggested, reflection on and in "action" may be so implicit that teacher candidates are at a loss in terms of how to deeply reflect on these aspects of their practice. This confusion represents a challenge for teacher educators since they are caught between scaffolding reflection and reducing it to a series of steps (Jay & Johnson, 2002). In this way, the practice of reflection is not free of authoritative or internally persuasive discourse. For instance, does a candidate implement findings unearthed by a teacher educator? Or do they draw on insights

gained through a step-by-step process handed down from an uninvolved theorist? Or do they instead trust their own intuitive sense of reflection? Therefore teacher candidates, if asked to simply reflect on their socialization, learning, and evaluation, may once again find themselves uncertain as to how or what to employ in their practice with respect to the findings of reflection.

Core reflection may realize reflection's potential to address the uncertainty surrounding the discursive tensions found in socialization, building practice, and evaluation. As Korthagen, Kim and Greene (2013) argued, "Core reflection provides a means to integrate, rather than separate the multiple dimensions of our wholeness as humans – our thoughts, our feelings, our desires, and ideals – and to bring the full power and potential of that wholeness to bear upon the experiences of teaching and learning" (p. 4). Whether intended or not, the phenomenon of learning to teach often pushes preservice teachers to default to "downloading" preexisting discourses found in the areas of socialization, competencies, and teacher evaluation. Core reflection could provide a tool that may help teacher candidates choose a discourse with intention during moments of uncertainty.

In this review of the literature, I sought to explore the discourses associated with teacher education and some of the uncertainties associated with socialization, learning to teach, and evaluating teaching. The literature suggests core reflection may address feelings of uncertainty and tension associated with discourses that teacher candidates typically encounter. Rather than finding oneself downloading pre-determined discourses, student teachers may experience core reflection as an intentional approach to addressing uncertainty. This study explored this possibility.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study sought to gain greater insight into how preservice teachers experience core reflection as a tool for addressing uncertain moments encountered during student teaching. In previous chapters, I outlined a phenomenological research problem and reviewed the literature in phenomenological terms. In this chapter, I describe how critical qualitative methodology addressed the phenomenological purpose of the study. Broadly speaking, qualitative inquiry provided the basis for this inquiry as this approach best lends itself to making sense of participants' experience (Creswell, 2008). This chapter enumerates the various methodological aspects of this qualitative study. These aspects include a description of the study's phenomenological approach and of the critical approach to data collection, analysis, and validity. I argue that a dialogue between critical theory and phenomenology (and the methods associated with these approaches) best addresses the question: How do student teachers experience core reflection?

Research Design

The aforementioned research question is primarily phenomenological and this orientation provided focus for this qualitative inquiry. I sought to understand core reflection as phenomena which may "manifest and appear in and through the lifeworld" (Vagle, 2014, p. 70). Phenomenologists traditionally have used the word "intentionality" to describe the connection between self and the surrounding environment. Classical phenomenology, however, has been critiqued for its "focus on *essence*—that is on the view that there is an essential structure to a phenomeneon and the intentional relations that characterize that phenomenon" (Vagle, 2014, p. 28-29). I and others (Carspecken, 1996; Vagle, 2014) find this essentialist view of phenomena and intentionality problematic. For example, a classically phenomenological perspective might

view the socialization phenomena discussed in the previous chapter as immutable and mutually exclusive from other discursive phenomena. This historically essentialist view is why I use Vagle's (2014) post-intentional phenomenological approach rather than solely relying upon a classically phenomenological stance. Post-intentional phenomenology seeks to trouble classical phenomenological notions of "bracketing existence" to uncover "essential truths" found within individuals. Post-intentional phenomenology instead situates phenomenon "socially," while also maintaining classical phenomenology's emphasis on an analysis of phenomena rather than individual cases (Vagle, 2014).

The phenomena under investigation are the post-intentional relationships between a preservice teacher, core reflection, and the school environment the student teacher encounters. I refer to them as "post-intentional" because a more classical phenomenological intentional designation implies a social structure overlaid with a participant's essential semi-fixed "being." Rather than assuming generalizability across all contexts with all participants, this study instead captures a moment in time where student teaching intersects with core reflection and these particular participants at this stage of their lives. This study instead sought to investigate a more fluid and socially constructed structure/participant lifeworld. I made this epistemological choice for two reasons: (1) to address phenomenology's critiques by highlighting the ways phenomenology has "grown and changed" since Husserl and Heidegger (Vagle, 2014, p. 113) and (2) to bring it into dialogue with critical qualitative methodology.

In addition to being critiqued for its essentialist trappings, phenomenology has also been critiqued as being overly reliant on perception and presence as means to explicate phenomena. With respect to perception, Carspecken (1996) argued that our efforts to communicate these phenomena are, at best, at least one step removed from the perception of the experience. With

this problem in mind, he called into question the validity of a purely phenomenological method of inquiry:

> At no moment can we be both simply aware of an object and aware that we are aware so that perception becomes a certain ground for knowing. At the moment of "knowledge," of being aware that we are aware, we at best have an image or trace of the object given to us presumably just before during a moment of simple awareness. Presence cannot give us certain knowledge. And yet presence is the basis of phenomenological theory of truth. (p. 13)

Though Vagle's post-intentional phenomenology attempts to account for the ways intentionality is socially constructed, it lacks clarity in terms of how to capture presence methodologically and thus does not do enough, in my estimation, to address the above critique. I agree with Carspecken (1996) methodologically, when he called to go beyond the classical phenomenological notion of "sense perception and a predifferentiated experience of human communication" (p. 13). Though post-intentional phenomenology acknowledges the ways our interpretations of sense perception (and the ways we communicate this to others) are informed by the ways we are situated in a society as social creatures, it takes a more idiosyncratic approach to analyzing and interpreting these moments of presence. In my estimation, this idiosyncratic approach seems to not fully account for the ways participants (and researchers) interpret phenomena in socially constructed ways and subsequently communicate it to others, nor does it provide a systematic way for researchers to not only account for these factors, but interpret and analyze these phenomena as discourse. Given post-intentional phenomenology's lack of clarity in terms of how to address the presence question methodologically, I draw upon critical

qualitative methodology and its emphasis on systematically and pragmatically analyzing communication as a means to understand the lifeworld of participants.

Combining a phenomenological epistemology with a critical qualitative methodology may seem incompatible at first glance. While it is true that critical theory tends to foreground the ways power may influence the lifeworld, this does not suggest it must methodologically do so (Carspecken, 1996). These two approaches to qualitative research are not only amenable to each other, but enhance each other. Vagle (2014), a phenomenological researcher, claimed there is "not a single crystal clear and unified way to craft phenomenological research" (p. 52) and further explained that post-intentional phenomenology, with its emphasis on the social, may be used in political ways. Carspecken (1996), conversely, asserted that critical methodology does not exclude those "who wish to study features of human life and human experience that are not overtly political" (p. 2). This suggests both approaches maintain enough flexibility to be in dialogue with one another. Additionally, critical methodology is advantageous because discourse cannot be uncoupled from power (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Moreover, a post-intentional phenomenological lens provides epistemological focus. In summary, phenomenology describes what this study explored and critical qualitative methodology explains how this study was carried out.

Participants and Context

Phenomenological studies call for participants who have "experienced the phenomenon under investigation" and are equipped to provide a "thorough and rich description of the phenomenon, and who collectively represent the range of multiple, partial, and varied contexts" identified for the study (Vagle, 2014, p. 128). The number of participants in a phenomenological study is proportional to the complexity of the phenomena—greater complexity suggests more

participants (Dahlberg et al., 2008). A study of the experience of core reflection and the discourses it addresses in the schooling environment certainly provided its fair share of complexity.

A need for more participants was balanced with the fact that "it is typical in qualitative research to study a few individuals or cases…because the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual" (Creswell, 2008, p. 217). For these reasons, I recruited four participants. This number is an adequate number of participants for a qualitative lifeworld study, while also not sacrificing depth of inquiry.

Participants were chosen using purposeful sampling, which is "intentionally select[ing] individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon. The standard in choosing participants and sites is whether they are 'information rich'" (Creswell, 2008, p. 214). Given that the context was within teacher education, I found participants from a list of students in the teacher education program who were scheduled to student teach in fall 2015. After initially emailing all teacher candidates on this list and only receiving interest from student teachers who were four or more hours drive from my location, I emailed the list a second time, this time offering to pay participants ten dollars per hour of participation. This adjustment yielded four participant candidates who were within a two hours' drive of campus and these four were selected for this study.

These four participants, all White, female, and in their early twenties, will be called by their pseudonyms (Katie, Allison, Nicole, and Sarah) for the remainder of this dissertation. Katie and Nicole taught in elementary schools; Allison and Sarah taught in high schools. Allison's student teaching also included a "Teach Abroad" experience and so her student teaching was

condensed to ten weeks. Nicole student taught for sixteen weeks, ten of which were at an elementary school and six of which were in a English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom at a middle school. Katie and Sarah student taught for twelve weeks. The specifics of their placements and their biography will be described in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Data Collection

I collected data in three primary ways. I used a combination of audio-recorded interviews, video recorded core reflection sessions, and audio-recorded Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) sessions. These methods were used with participants who were student teaching in secondary and elementary schools during the fall of 2015.

The ideal qualitative interview is semi-structured (Carspecken, 1996). Semi-structured interviews contain a lead off question, domain interests, and possible follow-up questions. These interviews start off with a lead question that is more concrete in nature – a "typical day" question or about an actual event that took place but that the researcher did not observe (Carspecken, 1996, p. 156). The protocol includes domain interests which are items the interview seeks to address. Follow up questions seek to address each domain. Questions are designed to prompt narration of the lifeworld and thus bring the participant into accord with that mindset. For example, I might ask, "Our core reflection session suggested you were really inspired in class yesterday when you were teaching about genetics. Can you tell me about that as if you were describing a scene in a movie?" This sort of question would be asked instead of simply asking a more abstract question such as, "What way is the best way to teach for you?"

These semi-structured interviews, up to one hour in length, took place on three different occasions during the study. One took place prior to student teaching, another at the end of their first month of student teaching, and then finally one at the end of student teaching. The first

interview was used to establish a primary record of the lifeworld of each participant and contained covert categories centered on the participants' biographies and the kinds of activities the participant found inspiring, both in life and in teaching. A second interview took place after a month of student teaching. At this point, participants had begun to experience a tension between their internally persuasive and authoritative discourses (see Chapter 2) and this interview sought to elicit a discussion surrounding these issues. The third and final interview sought to understand the connection, if any, between core reflection and the way it may or may not have provided a counter discourse to authoritative and internally persuasive discourses.

Core reflection itself also served as a data collection tool. Core reflection has already been discussed in depth in previous chapters, but what has not been discussed has been its methodological application. Core reflection sessions were one-on-one meetings, up to an hour, and took place once per week for eight weeks during student teaching. The first few sessions of core reflection oriented participants to the core reflection process in more general terms by connecting it to practices preservice teachers most commonly associate with reflection. I took this approach to ease participants into core reflection rather than immediately starting with "confrontation" moments that may be construed as a challenge to a participant's identity (see Chapter 1). Subsequent sessions added features such as "confrontation" and the "reality check role play" (see Chapter 1). Since reflection sessions were video recorded, this type of data was also available for analysis, which was largely used to confirm dialogical interpretations rather than elicit new findings. For instance, obstacles encountered by participants were addressed during core reflection sessions and were analyzed and then video was used to triangulate verbal communication with kinesthetic (e.g., pointing to placemats).

Videos collected from core reflection sessions were also used during the third data collection method: Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR). IPR (Kagan 1980, 1984) uses video to assist participants in reflecting upon a previously filmed experience, in this case core reflection. As Larsen, Flesecker, and Steger (2008) explained,

> A central characteristic of the IPR interview is that [participants] are required to take an observer role (Elliot, 1986; Kagan, 1984) or an 'attitude of detachment' (Rennie, 1992, p.212) as they review the video-recording of their [core reflection] session…[The interviewer] refocus[es] participants' attention onto their past experience as much as possible…[and] provide[s]… an opportunity to access the participants' memories triggered by the video-recording replay rather than the participants' current thoughts, inferences, or generalizations about the session as it is currently being viewed. (p. 26)

IPR's ability to allow participants to step outside the core reflection experience to observe it from a more observer role make it an ideal phenomenological data collection tool. Carspecken (1996) echoed its utility for critical methods: "IPR is potent for eliciting articulations of tacit cultural material as well as for stimulating the expression of subjective material" (p. 163). IPR procedure asks for participants to watch a video of themselves and pause the video any time they wish to speak about their experience in the moment as they watch the video and/or the experience they recall at the time the video was filmed. Two IPR sessions were conducted: one after the first month of student teaching and one after the second month of student teaching.

To inspire greater comfort in discussing areas of sensitivity, such as participants' relationship with their cooperating teachers, all core reflection sessions, interviews, and IPR sessions were conducted outside of the schools wherein which these teacher candidates taught. Typically we met on weekday afternoons in private study rooms at public libraries. For the

initial interview, however, we met at local coffee shops. This was done not only for convenience, but also to provide a comfortable space for participants to get to know me as well as the study itself. Core reflection and IPR sessions, however, were conductively exclusively in small private rooms at local libraries, usually located in the same town or city as the participants' student teaching context.

All data were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Excerpts of the data that appear in this dissertation were lightly edited for clarity, though the words that appear are verbatim, unless noted otherwise. A summary of the timeline of data collection may be found in Table 1 below. In this table I include the data collection tool (e.g., interview, core reflection, or IPR) and note in parentheses the number of times I used this method. At the bottom of the table I also include the aspect of the study the tool addresses.

Table 1: Data Collection Timeline

Research Question: How do student teachers experience core reflection?

	Week 1	Weeks 2-6	Weeks 7-13	Week 14
Tools	Semi-Structured Interview (1)	Semi-Structured Interview (1), Core Reflection (3)	Core Reflection (5), IPR (2)	Semi-Structured Interview (1)
Time Frame	Late July 2015 (week prior to student teaching) 1 hour semi-structured interview	August 2015 (first month of student teaching during "phase in" period) One 1 hour semi-structured interview during Week 6	September and October 2015 (second and third month of student teaching) Five 1 hour core reflection sessions during Weeks 8-12	Late October/Early November 2015 (final week of student teaching during "phase out").

		Three 1 hour core reflection sessions during Weeks 2 through 5	Two 2 hour IPR sessions during Week 7 and 13	
Aspects of study it addresses	Establishing primary record of lifeworld of participants	Emphasis on Research Question	Emphasis on Research Question	Emphasis on Research Question and Validating Preliminary Findings

Data Analysis

I analyzed all data according to Carspecken's (1996) critical qualitative techniques. These analytical techniques include intersubjective strategies such as meaning field reconstruction and reconstructive horizon analysis. These analytical techniques are "reconstructive because [they] 'reconstruct' into explicit discourse, cultural and subjective factors that are largely tacit in nature" (p. 93). I used these analytical techniques throughout the study to code for discursive themes found in each phenomenal experience.

Carspecken (1996) referred to meaning fields as "consist[ing] of possible claims referenced by an act of meaning…meanings that other people in the setting might themselves infer, either overtly or tacitly" (p. 59, 95). Meaning field analysis can be undertaken at any time during the data collection, though initial stages should remain at a lower inferential level (i.e., only taking a participant's words at "face value"). Though it is not possible to absolutely validate the accuracy of meaning fields, "the more familiarity you have with the culture of your subjects, the closer your articulated meaning fields are likely to be to what the actors themselves report" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 96). Meaning fields may also be further validated with member checks and interview data, both of which I will later describe. Below is an example of a meaning

field constructed for this study. In it Katie described a lesson that "fell apart" in front of her university supervisor. In this analysis, I attempt to capture the broad field of possible meaning others in the setting might have inferred from Katie's words and behavior.

Meaning Field Example:

Katie: *I was explaining it and I could feel myself losing their concentration as I answered all these ridiculous* [spoken with emphasis] *questions. And the questions were like the littlest things and so then I think that's why I was getting stressed cause this is common sense to me. And that sounds horrible, but it was throwing off, I'm sure that's what was going through all the kids who weren't struggling with that. They were just like, "What's going on, why are we listening to this right now? This is a waste of time."*

[Meaning Field: I am feeling frustrated BECAUSE I think my students should know how to do the activity I have planned AND I think the activity's procedures are common sense and do not need to be explained BUT (possibly) I am feeling insecure BECAUSE what I'm saying right now makes me sound like I am unsympathetic towards my students AND/OR (possibly) I am impatient BECAUSE I think the kids asking ridiculous questions are holding back the rest of the class AND/OR (possibly) I am feeling stressed BECAUSE my students were losing concentration AND (possibly) my supervisor was watching me AND I was thinking at the time: "Come on guys, help me out because my supervisor is here."]

Embedded within these understandings of meaning are considerations of validity by the actors within the lifeworld. Carspecken (1996), drawing from Habermas, contended that "the meaning of a meaningful act has a horizon structure constituted by intersubjective relations. An act of meaning will possess a foreground (i.e., the meaning most readily recognized) represented

by symbols (usually linguistic symbols) used explicitly by the actor" (p. 103). These symbols, when reconstructed as meaningful modes of communication, imply four aspects of meaning: objective, subjective, normative, and identity claims. These claims are more or less backgrounded, which is to say, "the more backgrounded it is, the more 'assumed' or 'taken for granted' it is" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 119). Reconstructive horizon analysis (RHA) makes explicit objective, subjective, normative, and identity claims. These claims are articulated as meaning fields and organized according to how explicit they are to actors in the lifeworld. Again, as was the case with meaning field reconstruction, member checks and interview data may help validate RHA. Below is the same example, but applied to illustrate RHA. In it I attempt to capture some of the objective, subjective, normative, and identity claims Katie made during this same discussion on a lesson that failed in front of her supervisor:

Reconstructive Horizon Analysis Example

Katie: *I was explaining it and I could feel myself losing their concentration as I answered all these ridiculous* [spoken with emphasis] *questions. And the questions were like the littlest things and so then I think that's why I was getting stressed cause this is common sense to me. And that sounds horrible, but it was throwing off, I'm sure that's what was going through all the kids who weren't struggling with that. They were just like, "What's going on, why are we listening to this right now? This is a waste of time."*

	Objective Claims	Subjective Claims	Normative Claims	Identity Claims
Foreground	I taught a lesson with my supervisor present.	I feel stressed because students were losing concentration.	The questions I'm addressing should just be common sense.	I am a concerned teacher who is worried whether or not her students are

	Students asked a lot of questions before attempting this activity.	I am feeling impatient because I think the kids asking these ridiculous questions are holding back the rest of the class.	These kids should know how to do this without me explaining.	responding to her lesson.
Midground	My supervisor and cooperating teacher were present to observe this lesson. Supervisors and cooperating teachers evaluate student teachers.	I am feeling frustrated because I think my students should know how to do the activity I have planned. I was feeling stressed because my supervisor and cooperating teacher were observing me.	Teachers should expect more from students. The students of teachers should not have to ask so many questions.	I am a new teacher who is worried about whether or not my supervisor will approve of me, this lesson, and my instructional abilities.
Background	This situation occurred during one of my student teaching formal evaluations.	I am feeling insecure as I describe this situation because I might be sounding like I'm unsympathetic.	Teachers should be more sympathetic towards their students.	I am a person who is still not sure who she is as a teacher.

Carspecken (1996) articulated three reasons for meaning field reconstruction and RHA: (1) preliminary reconstructions may make the researcher more aware of aspects they may be missing or biases they may have and "what cultural forms are necessary to understand through further analysis"; (2) preliminary reconstructions may be used in conjunction with member checks to "calibrate" future reconstructions; and (3) final reconstructions may be used in final

write ups to articulate findings (p. 102). Beyond these purposes, meaning field reconstruction and RHA will provide the basis for theme coding, both preliminarily and conclusively. Carspecken (1996), however, cautioned that

> high level coding should take place [only] after one has developed low-level codes and used these codes to selected segments for intensive analysis. High level coding is needed to generalize findings that emerge from various forms of qualitative data analysis, particularly meaning and validity reconstruction, horizon analysis. (p. 148)

When coding, I paid particular attention to subjective and normative claims within RHA. The phenomenological discursive themes (i.e., authoritative and internally persuasive discourses) discussed in the coming chapters were anchored in foregrounded normative claims articulated during discussion of obstacles and ideals, while participants' experience of the process of core reflection were derived from codes formed from subjective claims made during interviews and IPR sessions. The below table summarizes the data analysis process and describes each technique:

Table 2: Data Collection and Analysis Matrix

Research Question: How do student teachers experience core reflection?

Data Sources	**Data Analysis**	**Description**
Audio transcripts from semi-structured interviews.	Critical Qualitative Method (Carspecken, 1996)	Use RHA and Member Checks to reach intersubjective understanding of lived experience of discourses of participants as articulated during interviews.
Audio transcripts and video from core reflection coaching sessions	Critical Qualitative Method (Carspecken, 1996)	Use RHA to reach intersubjective understanding of lived experience of discourses of participants

	Interpersonal Process Recall (Larsen, Flesaker & Stege, 2008)	during core reflection coaching sessions, with a particular emphasis on normative claims made during articulation of obstacles and ideals.
Transcripts from IPR	Critical Qualitative Method (Carspecken, 1996)	Use RHA to reach intersubjective understanding of lived experience of core reflection as a lived experience, particularly subjective and normative claims made.

Validity Considerations

As a researcher who simultaneously took on the role of researcher and coach, I recognized I had to be thoughtful about validity considerations. Creswell (2008) stated that "validating findings means that the researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the findings through strategies such as member checking or triangulation" (p. 266). Creswell's (2008) approach suggests strategies are implemented independent of data collection. A critical qualitative approach, however, seeks to embed validity concerns throughout all aspects of the research process. Therefore, for a study adopting critical methodology, findings are only valid in so far as validity is considered throughout. To explicate this approach, I adopted Dennis' (2013) orientation toward validity, which includes three interlocking aspects (see Figure 4 below). These aspects are: (1) application to characteristics of research; (2) quality of validity in ordinary life; and (3) application to the domains of doing research.

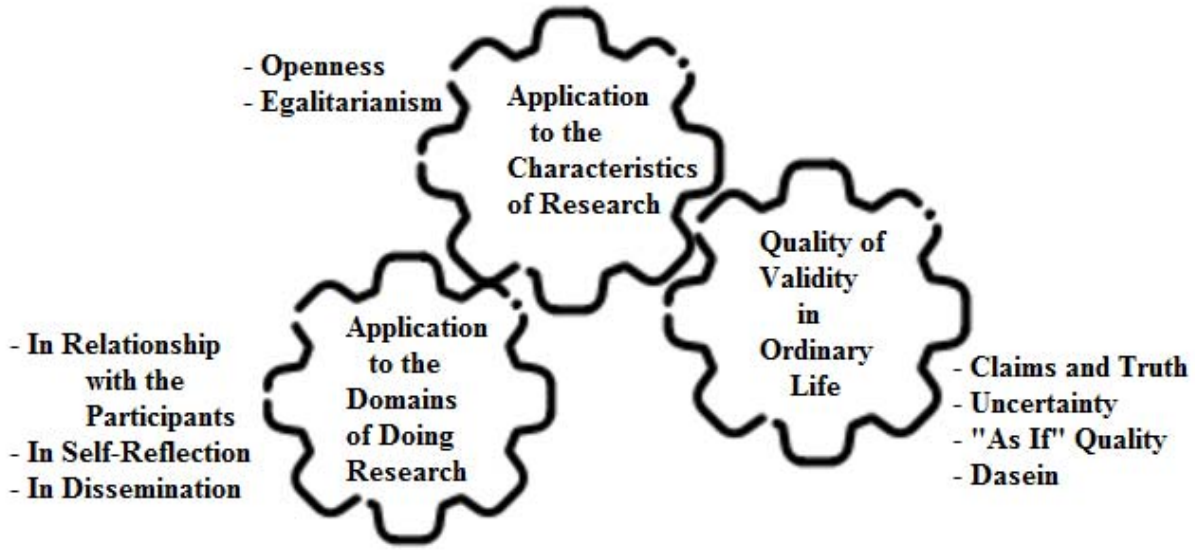

Figure 4: The Three Interlocking Aspects of Validity (Dennis, 2013)

Quality of Validity in Ordinary Life

As the above diagram illustrates, the three aspects related to validity are of equal importance and thus no one aspect is privileged over another. Furthermore, each component has equal significance towards the whole of validity. I start with the quality of validity in ordinary life because it seems logical to speak of validity in "everyday" terms before moving on to how it applies to the research process. As Dennis (2013) proposed, "By examining what validity looks like in ordinary life, we learn more about the nature of structure and validity itself" (p. 27). This section begins by discussing claims, truth, and uncertainty, before turning to the "as if" and *dasein* approaches towards data collection.

Critical qualitative methodology has within it embedded validity concerns. As Carspecken (1996) explained, "Critical research methodology is distinctive from other approaches in that it traces the origin of our concept of validity back to everyday human interaction. The validity claims of the researcher do not differ in nature from validity claims in normal human communications" (p. 58). This shows up most clearly in this study through the

four components of reconstructive horizon analysis (RHA). RHA, as its name would suggest, reconstructs the various types of validity claims (objective, subjective, normative, and identity claims). Within the RHA format (see data analysis section in this chapter), these claims are placed in more or less foregrounded terms based on intersubjective fields of meaning. These claims retain an "as-if" quality which is present in "ordinary life" and more or less implicit to actors in the lifeworld. RHA attempts to capture this "as if" quality of everyday life. Dennis (2013) explained that the "as if quality" is one where "we act *as if* we are making entitlements for which we also implicitly are expected to make good on should this be requested of us" (emphasis added, p. 24). Through a series of RHAs, the credibility of researcher interpretations is enhanced. Uncertainty never is completely eliminated, but it is at least addressed sufficiently enough by RHA for the purposes of research (Dennis, 2013).

Though all types validity claims will prove important for this study, since this study is primarily phenomenological, subjective claims play a particularly important role. Dennis (2013) defined subjective claims as ones which

> refer to claims a person makes about his or her own feelings, states of mind, proclivities and desires—attributes that existence of a person's internal world. These claims involve the principle of privileged access, which means that each subject has a distinctly privileged way of knowing his or her own feelings, states of mind, proclivities, desires, and matters internal…[though] we cannot validate these claims about one another through direct observation. Instead we must establish the extent to which the speaker is being honest and authentic; that is, the extent to which the speaker is both aware of his or her feelings and is being open and honest about those feelings. (p. 19)

These subjective claims become easier to validate for researchers when "we care in a way that brings our own identity into being with others while simultaneously opening up our interest in understanding others in a particular way" (p. 24). Dennis (2013) used Heidegger's phenomenological concept of *dasein,* which translates to "being there" (Cohn, 2002), to stand in for a kind of "disclosedness" that allows for greater intersubjectivity between researcher and participant (p. 24). To practice *dasein* is to take a stance of "basic acceptance of the freedom [of the participant] to choose [their own] experience of being" (Spinelli, 2005, p. 113). Taking such a stance as a researcher may provide as "ordinary" of an experience as possible for each participant and thus may enhance validity.

Application to Characteristics of Research

Applying validity concerns to the characteristics of research means considering the fact that "validity queries can be and regularly are violated on a procedural level because of power, other forms of inequity, and structural distortions" (Dennis, 2013, p. 29). Carspecken (1996) asserted the best way to counteract potential harms due to positionality is to make the research process as democratic, egalitarian, and open as possible. Beyond avoiding harm, which is something towards which all researchers should aspire, democratic research and openness by the researcher may increase the probability of authentic engagement by participants.

While *dasein* contributes to a certain degree of openness towards participants, care must be taken to avoid power imbalances between researcher and participant since "power distorts [participants'] capacities to freely assent and dissent" (Dennis, 2013, p. 29). Participant contributions cannot be said to be valid if they do not feel free to assent or dissent to aspects of the study, whether those are individual questions during an interview or, in the case of this study, the reflection component. This latter point is particularly important for this study because a

participant should not feel forced into a participant position if they feel that the rapport necessary for such a dynamic has not being established. The interviews, or what Carspecken (1996) called "dialogical data collection," sought to provide participants the space to assent or dissent to components of research, including, in this case, core reflection. As Carspecken (1996) advised:

> A central purpose of [dialogical data collection] is to democratize the research process. [Dialogic data collection] gives participants a voice in the research process and a chance to challenge material produced by the researcher…The best role to play is facilitator rather than colleague or peer…You construct a supportive and safe normative environment with your subjects and help them explore issues with their own vocabulary, their own metaphors, and their own ideas…Later on during a research project it is perfectly appropriate to share all your own ideas, to explain the meaning of the research vocabulary and social theories and to sometimes actively help your subjects in various ways. To make the research process democratic with power relations equalitized as is feasible, these sorts of peer discussions must take place in some form and to some degree. But they should take place after extensive [dialogic data collection] work has been completed, through the role of facilitator. (p. 155)

Carspecken's recommendations, however, do not occur in isolation from adopting a *dasein* stance. Interviews in and of themselves are not enough to create an open and egalitarian space; certain stances towards participants are more likely to evoke a democratic exchange than others. Conducting interviews and taking a *dasein* approach are vital steps towards validity; however, specific strategies within the "doing of research" are also necessary.

Application to the Domains of Doing Research

This section describes in greater detail those practices typically associated with establishing validity in research. These practices include Creswell's (2008) recommendation for "member checking" and "triangulation" to establish credibility of findings while also maintaining a researcher journal to separate researcher impressions from observations. These strategies seek to reduce inferential bias. These aspects are but one part of the application of validity to the domains of doing research; the second part focuses again on the relationship towards participants. This section will discuss all these aspects of validity, beginning with validity in relationship with participants, then turning to validity in self-reflection, and finally concluding with validity in dissemination.

Validity in relationship with participants may be achieved through the encouragement of naturalistic interactions between the researcher and the participants. Carspecken (1996) suggested several strategies to facilitate this. One of these strategies is through prolonged engagement with participants. Prolonged engagement generally results in participants feeling more natural in their interactions with the researcher because the "newness" of the experience has presumably subsided somewhat. Natural interactions between participants and the research may also be fostered through encouraging participants to explain the terms they use in their own words while also conducting interviews in settings that feel naturalistic to them. Researchers should also take care to create naturalistic dialogue during interviews by avoiding non-leading interview techniques. For example, it is too leading to ask, "What do you think about core reflection?"

Validity in self-reflection calls for researchers to consider actions with greater scrutiny while also making note of "what frames our seeing-spaces of constructed visibility and

incitements to constitute power/knowledge" (Lather, 1993, p. 675). Vagle (2014) argued, "Examining your own assumptions gives you a better chance of taking hold of them, rather than the assumptions taking hold of you and in turn the phenomenon under investigation" (p. 133). To combat this, Vagle (2014) recommended a reflexive journal which consists of the following:

1. Moments when [the participant] instinctively connect[s] with what they/we observe and moments in which they/we instinctively disconnect;
2. Our assumptions of normality;
3. Our bottom lines, that is those beliefs, perceptions, perspectives, opinions that we refuse to shed; and
4. Moments in which they/we are shocked by what they/we observe. (p. 132)

During data collection and analysis, I kept a reflexive field journal to cover the above topics to better track assumptions that may have been blocking my ability to remain open and intersubjective with participants.

Validity in dissemination asks: Is the report of the research accurate and credible to the participants studied? Consistency is one way to enhance validity. Multiple interviews may strengthen credibility, particularly if separate interviews reveal consistent results across time. Validity is also strengthened if what is said by participants matches up with what is observed in video during, for example, core reflection sessions. In addition to supporting consistency, Carspecken (1996) also advocated several other strategies to address validity in dissemination. Some of these include member checks and negative case analysis. I conducted member checks by sending my preliminary findings to participants to verify that they represented their experience of the discursive phenomena in question. Carspecken (1996) particularly emphasized member checks as a way to validate "reconstructions to equalize power relations" (p. 141).

Reconstructions may also be validated through negative case analysis. Negative case analysis seeks out incidents in dialogic data that appear to evoke similar phenomenon but do not seem to be consistent with coded reconstructions. A resolution of the inconsistency through reconstruction further validates the phenomenon, whereas a persistent inconsistency after analysis suggests new or separate phenomena (Carspecken, 1996).

A Summary of Validity Considerations

I have given such emphasis to validity concerns due to my belief that validity plays a pivotal role in deciding what can be deemed a "good" study. Consideration of validity is especially important since I, as a researcher, also took on a coaching position with participants. Being in such a role meant an ethic of care was emphasized more than other types of studies. For this reason, I leaned heavily on Dennis' (2013) description of validity. Though her work emphasized caring more than this study did, Dennis has nevertheless shown how critical methodology can be effective in studying phenomena where an ethic of caring plays a larger role (see Korth, 1998). Therefore her approach towards validity is informed by experience and thus best complements my study. I contend this type of approach was important during the study of the coaching dynamic despite the fact that the caring aspect was more implicit in core reflection. The below table summarizes the various validity safeguards articulated in this section:

Table 3: Validity Matrix

Data Sources	Data Analysis	Validity Concerns	Validity Safeguards
Semi-structured interviews	Critical Qualitative Method (Carspecken, 1996)	-Power Imbalance -Interpretive Bias	-*Dasein* stance -RHA -Reflexive Field Journal -Member Checks

Core reflection coaching sessions	Critical Qualitative Method (Carspecken, 1996)	-Power Imbalance -Interpretive Bias	-*Dasein* stance -Reflexive Field Journal -RHA -Interviews
Interpersonal Process Recall	IPR (Larsen, Flesaker & Stege, 2008) Critical Qualitative Method (Carspecken, 1996)	-Power Imbalance -Interpretive Bias	-*Dasein* stance -Reflexive Field Journal -Member Checks -RHA -Negative Case Analysis

Summary

This study took a critical qualitative approach to answer the phenomenological research question: How do student teachers experience core reflection? This question was addressed primarily through various means of dialogical data collection (interviews, core reflection, and interpersonal process recall) and analyzed through various intersubjective reconstructive techniques (meaning fields and reconstructive horizon analysis). Validity was addressed through three interdependent categories: quality of validity in everyday life; validity application in the domains of doing research; and validity application to the characteristics of research. This chapter sought to describe these means of addressing the research question.

While I have discussed the means of my research at great length in this chapter, I have been mostly silent on potential outcomes. The next five chapters will comment on findings, though not necessarily outcomes, at least in the objective sense of the word, since "what happened" outside of our core reflection sessions, interviews, and IPR sessions was not studied.

However, I want to conclude with a brief commentary of outcomes because avoiding discussion on this topic may suggest I had not considered possible outcomes and this was not the case.

Cho and Trent (2006) discussed two different qualitative approaches that may point to outcomes of research: transactional and transformational. The direction a study leans between these two approaches informs whether it is "worthwhile." Those who favor transactional research favor an understanding of participants whereas transformational research, as the name would imply, stresses eventual transformational outcomes. Occasionally these two approaches can be in tension with one another, though they need not be. As a study which seeks to gain insights into how preservice teachers experience core reflection as a method for addressing the uncertainties they encounter during student teaching, it privileges the transactional but aspires to be transformational. Ultimately participants decided to what degree this study was the former or the latter. As a study that sought to be egalitarian, it was open to both.

Chapter 4: Katie

Tom – So you walk into the class to start the activity. What do you do first?

Katie - So I walk in and I go, “Okay guys, we're gonna play a really fun game. You guys already know it, but we're gonna put another little fun spin on it” and I'd say “We are actually gonna play the game 'Scoot,' but we're gonna play it with rounding.” And I would be more enthusiastic and loud, of course. Then I would say, “Can I have two volunteers? I need *two* volunteers.”

T - And I'm sure the kids are excited and they all run up there and they’re like, “Yeah, let's do this!”

K - And then I'd probably call on the two that are the least excited and they would come up and I would kind of have them demonstrate to the rest of the class what we are doing. And I would explain each step as they move. I'd tell them what to do.

T - So what if the students are still kind of loud or they're not paying attention during the demonstration?

K - I think in that case I would probably stop. Wait for them a little bit and then I would get my stern voice out, just a little, and I would probably be, “Boys and girls, you need to listen. This is important. We're not gonna be able to play this fun game if you guys can't keep it under control.”

T - So then the students are, “Okay, okay, we're gonna listen now.” So then you're doing the demonstration and then what happens after you've done the demonstration?

K - After I've done the demonstration, then I would send those two back to their seats and I'd say, “Okay, everyone look at your card, what number are you on?” And I would have them tell me. And I feel like I should set up something like an arrow of some sort just to

show them, like if you're in a race when it says, “If you're here, go this way.” Even if it's just a piece of construction paper that shows an arrow pointing. Just to show them which desk to go to and then they would have it at the other end so it's kind of like a slide or a game. And we would do a round and I would say, “Stop. Everyone freeze. How did that go? Give me a ‘thumbs up’ if it went really well and you know exactly what you're supposed to do. ‘Thumbs down’ if you're totally confused and have no idea where you should be or what you should be doing. And a ‘thumbs in the middle’ if you're kind of so-so.” And I would kind of gauge how many thumbs are in which direction.

T - So let's say half of them are kind of “thumbs middle” or “thumbs down.” What then?

K - I would have a couple of the “thumbs up” people come up and demonstrate what they think it should be. Just pick two people who give the “thumbs up” and I would have them come up and show and see if having them explain it in a different way helps. So we'd do another round and I'd pause and then hopefully there would be more “thumbs up” [next time] and I'd be like, okay, now who ever has a “thumbs down” I can go stand by as we play. Just to kind of make sure they are on task. So I can be, “Okay, now you need to do this and this and now scoot right here.” So I'd kind of stick with whoever's really struggling.

T - I see the empathy because you see this person's struggling and you want to help and you're gonna work with them and get them sort of straightened out. And then I saw, in action, the creativity, because I was, “We didn't talk about that” where you're like “I'll just take the two with the ‘thumbs up’ and I'll have them show it.” And boom, right there -- creativity came out.

K - Boom! *(Laughs.)*

T - So you can do this!

K - I can. I can.

T - You just gotta not listen to the…

K - …obstacle.

T - And you were doing it here when talking about [your lesson] - the creativity just came out of nowhere.

K - I was kind of feeling like, "I don't know what to do," but then I was "No. You're gonna get caught [in the obstacle]."

The above example represents the culmination of an hour-long core reflection session with Katie Williams (see Appendix for full transcription). We end this session with a "role play" of her lesson. In this role play, I attempted (as she later remarked in an interview) to "throw wrenches" into her lesson by asking "what if" questions at various key moments. I see these key moments as ones where she could potentially get "dragged" into an obstacle (often taking the form of a constellation of interrelated beliefs). In this session, the "obstructing" beliefs were related to uncertainty with respect to her expectations of student behavior, how flexible she could be with her lesson plan, and how she was going to be evaluated by her cooperating teacher and university supervisor. These beliefs seemed to be informed by discourses related to teacher and student learning, teacher socialization, and teacher evaluation. In this role-play, rather than freeze and dwell on the limiting aspects of these discourses, Katie instead chose to draw upon her strengths of creativity and empathy to move the class, as she imagined it, towards a hypothetical space where her lesson goes smoothly and her cooperating teacher and university supervisor both give her a good review.

Often, as was the case with this session, the obstacles Katie encountered seemed to derive their authority from discourse. These beliefs, and the discourses they drew upon, suggested to Katie what she ought to do when confronted with uncertainty. Fortunately, Katie's openness to the core reflection approach provided a relatively clear look at these beliefs, the discourses that informed them, and the counter-discourses available to her. Thus, I consider the case of Katie to be a good place to begin an exploration of how student teachers use core reflection as a method of addressing uncertainty.

In this chapter, I discuss some of the ways Katie experienced core reflection and the ways it brought to light the various discourses she seemed to draw upon during uncertain moments. Following a discussion of these findings, I bring Katie's experiences into dialogue with some of the literature on teacher education. Finally, I conclude with some of Katie's impressions of core reflection as a part of her journey in learning to teach.

About Katie

Katie's student teaching took place at a medium sized elementary school, near a large Midwestern city. In our initial meeting prior to student teaching, she described her third grade classroom placement as ideal since "kids that age don't get distracted as easily" and "don't get sassy." It was clear to me within the first few minutes of this meeting that Katie was going to be an ideal candidate for core reflection. With little hesitation, she went into depth regarding her dreams and anxieties going into student teaching. She told me how she always wanted to be a teacher, how she "played school" as a child, how she grew up in the same Midwestern state as her college (the same college both her parents and brother had gone to), how difficult it was to be "on her own" during her freshmen year of college, how important active learning is to her, how

she's always been a "rule follower," a "type A" personality, a "planner," an "anxious person sometimes" – all within the first twenty minutes of that first interview in late July.

Katie and I built a quick rapport and, once we began, she enthusiastically engaged with core reflection (so much so that a librarian had to tell us to quiet down during one session). During our eight core reflection sessions, Katie and I discussed a few different kinds of problems, though many of them eventually settled on her thoughts and experiences she had with a few students she characterized as "difficult." On other occasions we also reflected upon her beliefs about students and how these intersected with her thoughts on classroom management and her fears regarding her cooperating teacher's assessment of Katie's teaching. While we did not always completely resolve the problem situations she brought with her to our sessions, in Katie's estimation, we always ended "at a better place" after engaging in core reflection.

Katie's student teaching was twelve weeks, running from early August until mid-November. Her cooperating teacher, Marie Michaels, eased her into taking full control of the class. This gave us ample space on the calendar to begin our weekly core reflection sessions once she had comfortably settled into her placement. We began our sessions once she felt she had enough teaching experience to reflect upon a problem or inspirational situation she found relevant to her student teaching.

As I described in Chapter 3, we eased into core reflection rather than diving straight into it at its most complex. The first three sessions were simplified somewhat to help her and other participants gain a familiarity and comfort with both myself and the process of core reflection. The final five sessions were implemented in core reflection's fully realized form. Of the eight sessions, five related to issues with individual students while four focused on one recurrent "problem" student, Brad. Two sessions were focused on larger group instructional and

classroom management issues and one session focused on an inspirational moment Katie experienced in the classroom.

Core Reflection with Katie

Similar to other student teachers in this study, Katie often came into our core reflection sessions with problems in mind and was eager to share the details of these problem situations in full detail. Initially Katie spent a great deal of time providing context to the problem and significant detail about each student's involvement. In the early stages of her student teaching, this detail often led to us getting "stuck" discussing the problem for up to half of our sixty minute core reflection sessions. As a result, at the outset of subsequent sessions, I suggested she limit her opening descriptions to the essential aspects of the problem situation because, without that level of guidance, our core reflection sessions may have quickly digressed into "venting" sessions. This venting, while perhaps cathartic, would have resulted in becoming stuck in the "thinking level" of the elevator (see Chapter 1), rather than "functioning more from a state of presence" (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009, p. 13).

Our initial inclination to become "stuck" at the thinking level became most apparent during an Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) session. While watching a video of herself conducing core reflection, Katie admitted in this session that she had been thinking about a "solution" while we were supposed to be only reflecting upon the problem. This realization led me to make a point to remind all participants, including Katie, how they should avoid thinking about "solutions" to their problems. Per the procedure and steps of core reflection (see Chapter 1 or Figure 5 below), a participant was to only stay "present" with the step they were on. Reflecting upon the problem situation, for example, meant a participant was to only imagine themselves back in the classroom during the situation of the problem; they were not to get caught

up in thinking about finding the answer. Korthagen and Evelein (2015) called this phenomenon "solution thinking." After this reminder, Katie would often catch herself engaging in "solution thinking," interrupt herself, and say something such as "Oh, but [the solution] is not really relevant right now."

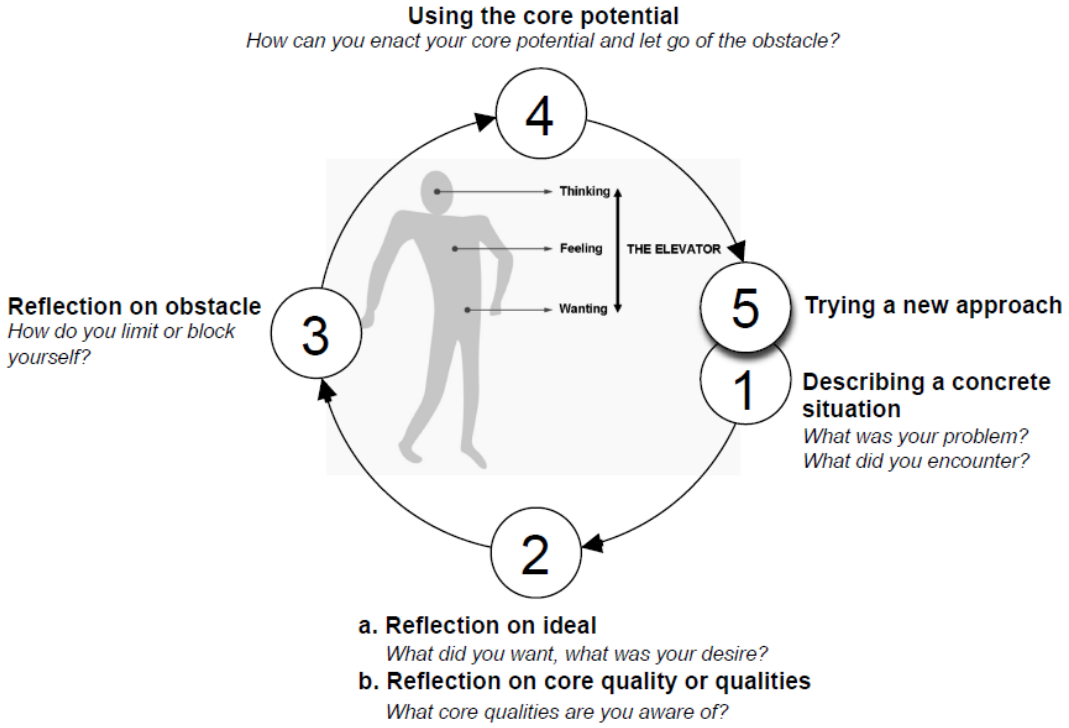

Figure 5: The Steps of Core Reflection (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005)

To address "solution thinking," it became apparent that I needed to take a more directive role in core reflection, not only with Katie, but also with Allison, Nicole, and Sarah. This decision was grounded in core reflection theory because, unlike a "person centered approach," Korthagen and Vasalos (2009) posited that a coach should be more directive:

> In most cases, some directed form of reflection and clearly focused support in going through the various phases of core reflection is necessary, especially in order to help people refrain from repeating ineffective patterns over and over again. It is important to emphasize, however, that the direction the [coach] gives is not so much oriented towards

> certain criteria for specific professional behavior the practitioner should demonstrate. A [coach] applying Core Reflection should in our view give clear directions with regard to the *reflection process* rather than regarding the actual professional behavior aimed at. What this actual behavior looks like can only be discovered by the [participant], by becoming aware of his or her professional ideals. And we believe that a [coach] should be fairly nondirective when it comes to the formulation and enactment of such ideals by the [participant] (p. 13).

Despite the fact that taking a directive stance is fully in line with core reflection philosophy, I readily admit that I sometimes wondered if my approach may have occasionally influenced where her ideal ultimately landed. I was particularly concerned about playing too large a role in core reflection because Katie referred to herself as a "people pleaser" and "follower." As part of my directive role, I occasionally pointed out Katie's core qualities as they appeared in her ideal and in one of our early sessions I pointed out a core quality of creativity in Katie. Initially Katie was resistant to this quality, but the resistance seemed to subside once she realized she had conflated creativity with originality. To draw a distinction, I pointed out some of the ways creativity may manifest in her ideal, after which Katie ended up taking up one of my examples of creativity and incorporating it into her ideal. In looking back at this session during an IPR, Katie openly wondered if she "cheated" by "piggy backing off of what [I] said" about creativity.

As I later show in the discursive findings section, I sensed Katie eventually took more ownership of this quality, regardless of whether or not the way we arrived at it was "cheating," at least in Katie's estimation. In a later IPR, Katie remarked:

> I can see myself thinking so hard about it; I was just visualizing the ideal. I was really in the moment visualizing it; I can also see my creativity kicking in. Maybe I can change

> the way it happened? You can see that I'm so positive suddenly. I was really getting on board with the situation—this is an option. This can work and I was starting to get excited about it because it had been such a bad situation before. It was so exciting to make it better and try it in the future.

As I will illustrate later in this chapter, this excitement seemed to be, in part, a result of what I call a discursive turn. Katie began to interrogate the discourses available to her and consider new ones to turn to during moments of uncertainty.

I argue that core reflection played a role in this discursive turn. Within the steps of core reflection, this discursive turn most often occurred between steps 3 and 4 (see Figure 5 above). However, before this turn could occur, a concrete problem situation needed to be articulated (see Step 1). Often a participant came into core reflection seeking to reflect upon a problem they were having with, for example, a specific student or class. In contrast, sometimes they came in wanting to reflect upon a particularly inspirational moment and core reflection is flexible enough to accommodate for this kind of reflection as well (see Chapter 7).

In Katie's case, however, she almost always came in with a problem in mind. During one session, Katie began by expressing frustration with her reading group:

> I have this reading group with five students and it's hard to keep them on topic. They go off on tangents. I don't want to be rigid by saying "no talking," but I don't know how to keep them from talking so much. I feel pressure when their conversations are all over the place because I don't want them to [go] off [so far] on a topic that they aren't getting anything out of [the lesson].

According to core reflection theory, this type of problem was a little too abstract to reflect upon, so I asked Katie to make this situation more concrete by asking her to articulate a specific time

when she experienced uncertainty and "pressure." My goal for this first step of core reflection was to get her to relive the problem situation in as vivid a detail as she could. Once she found herself reliving this problem situation, I brought in "the elevator" (i.e., I asked her what she thought, felt, and wanted).

Once Katie was in contact with her problem situation, we moved on to how she pictured her ideal, in this case, how she wanted her reading group to operate. Again, as was the case with the problem situation, I tried to encourage her to be as present as she could with her ideal. The elevator was applied again as soon as she made contact with her ideal and this helped her make explicit the ways she thought and felt differently about the situation once it became her ideal. During Katie's description of her ideal, I made a mental note of the character strengths (i.e., core qualities) she displayed in her ideal. Before suggesting qualities to her, I sought to confirm the core qualities I noticed by asking Katie what she thought these qualities were. In this example, she mentioned leadership, creativity, and empathy as qualities she would draw upon in her ideal reading group.

The discursive turn began when I asked her what kept her from achieving this ideal (see Step 2b in Figure 5). In this example, Katie confessed, "Honestly, it's these kids" that kept the ideal from coming to fruition. In response, I summarized Katie's obstacle by highlighting the fact that student behavior seemed to be the "external obstacle" to her ideal and then, following the elevator, asked what she thought about this external obstacle. This "thinking" question elicited assumptions she held about what should be happening, in this case concerning "these kids," and why, in her estimation, it was not happening. Her thoughts and feelings I paraphrased and summarized as an "internal obstacle," in this case, her thought that "these kids should know better." After confirming with her that this thought was in fact the belief she held, I, again,

following the elevator, asked what she thought, felt, and wanted with respect to an internal obstacle of "these kids should know better."

This step often resulted in a participant being confronted with the ways their beliefs (often informed by discursive phenomena) may be influencing their actions. Ideally, prior to this confrontation, trust and rapport are established to reduce defensive feelings, such as feelings of being judged by the coach. Luckily, by this point in our work together, Katie and I had developed a strong rapport and it seemed as though she trusted that I held nothing but good intentions towards her. These two aspects of a coach-participant relationship seemed, in my estimation, to be driving points towards beginning to make a discursive turn towards "Tuning in To What my Students Need," a turn aided by Katie's use of empathy and creativity qualities.

Once Katie's ideal, core qualities, and obstacles (external and internal) were articulated, she and I stepped back to consider each individual piece we had reflected upon (see Step 3 in Figure 5). We considered Katie's obstacle, in this case, that her students should "know better." We then juxtaposed this obstacle with the qualities she could be drawing upon instead (e.g., leadership, empathy, and creativity). I let her know from this moment forward she had a choice of dwelling upon and getting "dragged" into her internal obstacle or choosing to align herself with her core qualities. I also let her know that the "external obstacle" of student behavior may or may not change, but she always retained the choice to follow along with the "internal obstacle" or, instead, use empathy, creativity, and leadership to inform her actions in the classroom.

In this session, we revisited her ideal one more time to help her visualize how she may mobilize her core qualities in her scenario (see Step 4 in Figure 5) and then we performed a brief informal role play to test her commitment to her ideal and core qualities (see Step 5 in Figure 5).

Often I found we were fast approaching the sixty minute session time limit by the time we got to the point where we were ready for the role play. Being mindful of maintaining an egalitarian stance (see validity section of Chapter 3), I did not want to take advantage of participants (who already generously gave me so much of their time during student teaching) by extending our sessions beyond the agreed upon time span. So, unfortunately, these role plays were often brief compared with the rest of the reflection. The excerpt that begins this chapter is one example of a brief role play Katie and I did. On the rare occasion where we had extra time at the end of our sessions, I would ask participants to perform the elevator with me one more time to make note of what they thought, how they felt, and whether they felt the outcome of this role play was one they really wanted. We would make adjustments, time permitting, and reenact the role play to witness whether or not their new ideal came closer to manifesting their mission for teaching (see Figure 1 in Chapter 1).

Discursive Findings

The above represents a brief overview of one core reflection session with Katie and some of the ways she experienced this session and others like it. During this core reflection session and the seven others, we surfaced an internally persuasive discourse of "These Kids Should Just Know Better" and an authoritative discourse of "Doing the Right Thing." We also discussed a counter discourse of "Tuning in to What My Students Need." I begin this section by describing Katie's encounters with the aforementioned "These Kids Should Just Know Better" discourse.

Internally Persuasive Discourse: "These Kids Should Just Know Better"

At the beginning of this chapter, I presented the conclusion of a core reflection session. This same session began with Katie explaining the details of a "frustrating" lesson that occurred the previous week. She admitted she had been brooding over this lesson for several days before

we had a chance to reflect upon it. By the time her and I met, Katie was still unsure what exactly had gone wrong. In this lesson (she described it as a "Scoot"), she had students move from their seats to various work stations to work on rounding fractions. Her frustration over the lesson was partly informed by a series of interrelated beliefs she turned to during moments of uncertainty. These beliefs seemed to coalesce around a discourse that said, "These Kids Should Just Know Better."

Katie was initially optimistic about this lesson because students had successfully completed a "Scoot" activity previously, albeit during an English lesson. This time she attempted to use it to teach the rounding of fractions. Many students were immediately confused during her introduction of the activity and Katie, unsure why students were confused, decided to move forward with the lesson instead of addressing the confusion to chaotic results. Eventually, frustrated with all of the confusion, Katie prematurely ended the lesson and told students to fill out a worksheet on rounding instead. Exacerbating her irritation, Katie had selected this lesson to be observed by her cooperating teacher and university supervisor. Her frustration became apparent to me when her typical cheerful demeanor was replaced by annoyance. She went on to describe her introduction to the lesson and her students' subsequent confusion:

> I was explaining it and I could feel myself losing their concentration as I answered all these *ridiculous* questions. And the questions were like the littlest things and so then I think that's why I was getting stressed cause this is common sense to me. And that sounds horrible, but it was throwing [everything] off. I'm sure that's what was going through all the kids who weren't struggling with that. They were just like, "What's going on, why are we listening to this right now? This is a waste of time."

Here, Katie expressed irritation with the "ridiculous" and "common sense" questions her students were asking, while at the same time feeling pressure, real or imagined, from other students (and her university supervisor) to move ahead with the lesson. Sensing this pressure, Katie moved ahead with her lesson despite also sensing many students were not ready to move ahead.

This forging ahead and ignoring the ways students were responding to her lessons was a recurrent theme in the early stages of her student teaching. Often what she learned in these moments, to her astonishment, was that students needed more from her:

> You have to explain it to them, you have to... really honestly, these kids, I guess, it's been so long since I've been that age, I don't know. I'm still at that point where I'm still new enough that it still surprises me how in depth you need to go on just simple things. Like today I was teaching a lesson on life cycle of plants and I had to go into *every single detail* about what we needed to do before we could get started.

When confronted with this and other uncertain teaching moments, Katie seemed to turn to beliefs on student prior knowledge. These beliefs seemed to converge to fit into an internally persuasive "These Kids Should Just Know Better" discourse.

These expectations extended beyond this individual lesson and, thus, ended up finding their way into other encounters with students, both as a class and one-on-one. For example, in one core reflection session we discussed uncertainty in how to navigate off topic discussion in her reading group. In this session, she described working with students she called the "high ability kids":

> They are the ones who I feel like I can crack down the most and I can still ask of them these higher thinking questions. Rather than spend all the time just dealing with the core

basics, we can go into more and expect more of them. So when they don't give more, I crack down more.

Katie initially approached the problem with the "high ability kids" similarly to the "Scoot" activity: she turned to a belief that her students should know better—they should have the "common sense" to operate within a reading group independent of her providing a lot of structure and guidance. She went on to explain that since

> they are taken out of the classroom a lot to work on other things, I feel like they should be used to going out of the classroom and doing other things and doing these activities. They should know how it works because they do it a lot. So that's my expectation.

In addition to this lack of "common sense," Katie was also troubled by the fact that "these kids showed no remorse" when the "Scoot" activity failed or when her reading group had to be reprimanded for off-task discussion. She confessed to "not getting student apathy" because "I'm not like that." She admitted this indifferent attitude was "different from any other class I've ever been in."

Katie experienced a similar confusion over what to do with one "difficult" student, Brad. Brad's situation was one where she felt she needed to be especially sensitive. Brad's mother had died a few weeks prior to Katie's student teaching and he was still grieving. In response to circumstances surrounding Brad, administration advised Katie and her cooperating teacher, Ms. Michaels, to let Brad disengage from class if he so chose. Katie, concerned with Brad falling behind, often came to our sessions seeking help with engaging Brad. She was especially troubled by his unwillingness to respond to her requests. Yet despite all of Brad's personal struggles, Katie still considered his behavior disrespectful:

K - Refusing to respect authority is what I would say [about Brad]. Which that is another thing to keep in mind, knowing his past, it's always been an issue with him [even before his mother's death]. I wouldn't even say it's worse with him now. I would say it's just the same.

T - Okay. So what are you thinking in this particular scenario when you are like, "Okay, Brad, I need you to get back on task" and he just rolls his eyes and, as you say, doesn't respect authority.

K - That. Is like...like...I hate it. *(Laughs.)* It's kind of like nails on a chalkboard, it's just one of those things. I hate being disrespected because I always, I feel like I always try to be so respectful to everyone. Regardless of their age, who it is—I just hate [disrespect].

Unlike her beliefs of how students should behave during reading group and the Scoot activity, the discourses she drew upon to make sense of her problems with Brad seemed to have been supplemented with advice solicited by teachers working at her student teaching placement. To illustrate this fact, she cited the warnings of other faculty regarding Brad's "problems with authority" and how, in their estimation, he will try to "get away with whatever he can" and trying to engage him is a "waste of time."

Despite various discourses suggesting to Katie that working with Brad is a waste of time, she also wanted him to know that she was "on his side because he thinks so many people aren't on his side." At the same time, she did not want to "reward" his off task behavior because, as Ms. Michaels cautioned, he "will just learn that he can walk all over my rules." She even began to wonder if persistently engaging Brad would be, as other faculty at the school suggested, a waste of time:

K - In this situation it's less, “Am I doing the right thing?” but it's more, “Why am I wasting my time?” In this particular situation, at the forefront is: “Why am I even trying?”

T - What do you think about that?

K - I hate it. (*Laughs.)* I think it's stupid and I just need to shut it out, but it just gets hard sometimes because I just want to give so much to all of them and I feel like if I spend too much time on Brad, am I really doing what's best for...I guess that's another [belief]: Am I really doing what's best for the rest of the class? Because I don't know, I don't want them to miss out because this one student doesn't want to learn.

In this instance, Katie’s beliefs about Brad and his behavior began to dialogue with authoritative discourses of what is “best” and “right” for the rest of the class. Absent a readily available strategy, Katie often turned to discourses reinforced by her cooperating teacher as the model of what is “best” and “right” in her practice.

Authoritative Discourse: “Doing the Right Thing”

A second cluster of Katie’s beliefs coalesced around an authoritative discourse of “Doing the Right Thing.” This discourse presumed a clear line between “right” and “wrong” ways to teach and, as such, Katie spent a great deal of time and effort wondering what was right and subsequently attempting to conform to this view. This less-than-nuanced view of learning to teach seemed to result in a constant comparative style of self-assessment. For example, Katie viewed herself as a “too nice” compared to Ms. Michaels’s “sterner” style. Part of this assessment came from Ms. Michaels herself, who informed Katie she needed to “be more stern” in her interactions with students “or else they are going to walk all over you.” But Katie’s assessment of herself coming into student teaching also played a role. On multiple occasions,

Katie commented how “sternness” had always been a “weakness” and a “struggle,” that people in her past had called her a “pushover,” and how “all teachers need to be stern.”

Still, Katie occasionally felt ambivalent about receiving feedback on her lack of sternness. As she put it, “I don’t want to be told [to be more stern], I just want to be doing the right thing.” This desire to be “doing the right thing,” (e.g., being stern) without being told often created situations where Katie acted in ways she anticipated her cooperating teacher would approve, despite the fact that Ms. Michaels seldom gave much constructive criticism. Absent consistent feedback, Katie believed her cooperating teacher and university supervisor would hold an inflexible view of the “right” way to teach. This assumption led her to dismiss strengths she could have otherwise acted upon, particularly when her supervisor or cooperating teacher would observe her. Recalling an observation from her cooperating teacher, she spoke about “feeling blocked” from acting on her empathy because she feared Ms. Michaels would “disapprove of my management style.” Katie also mentioned feeling confined to following Ms. Michaels’s lessons, partly due to possible criticism from her cooperating teacher:

> I'm not sure [about creating and using my own lessons]. I'm really not. Because she is so, she wants things done her way. And I do, I want her to tell me what she thinks, but I also am someone who is driven by positive reinforcement myself, which is why I want to give it to students so badly because I want to be told that she thinks I'm doing a good job. I guess it's the fear of not knowing and being like, “She could think I’m really good or she could think I'm not good.” But she won't tell me. *(Laughs.)*

As a result of her uncertainty, Katie erred on the side of “sternness” and limited the types of lessons she incorporated with students, such as those that used group work (because Ms. Michaels had an aversion to group work). Katie seemed especially fixated, however, on the one

area of advice Ms. Michaels did provide: being stern with students. Our core reflection sessions during the middle part of Katie's student teaching seemed to revolve around this theme in particular. We often discussed the tension between "doing what's right" (e.g., being sterner) and expressing her strengths:

> The empathy [strength] is kind of hard. I feel I lose my sternness if I gain my empathy. And that's....[sternness] is not necessarily something I want to use, I would like to avoid that, but at the same time, I don't want to be sitting there [with Brad] being [empathetic]: "Oh, that just sucks, I'm so sorry you had such a rough day. Let's just sit here." That's not gonna get anyone anywhere. I take on those emotions so much that I think that would be hard to dwell on.

Despite her uncertainty regarding how empathy fit with her vision of what it is to be stern, empathy still seemed particularly important to Katie as she identified it as a core quality of hers in every one of our core reflection sessions. By our fifth reflection session, the tension between Katie's belief that "all teachers must be stern" and her quality of empathy finally became uncomfortably stark to Katie:

> K - I guess it's scary to me to think, what's authentic to me—what if that's wrong? Because I get scared that there's that overarching thing again that's outside of my head that's saying, "All teachers have to be stern and they have to have a strict side" and people have told me my whole life that you're not, you're just easy going and I don't know, I hate the word, but pushover. I don't want people to view me that way because I do have high expectations. Sometimes I end up getting disappointed rather than taking a stand. And so there's that obstacle of what if… *(Sighs.)* What if what feels right to me is not right?

T - And it feels not right because?

K - If it feels right to me, what if it's not right? What if it's never gonna work? What if I can never find that just planning, just structure, just empathy—what if it never works?

T - Yeah, that's definitely a *big* internal obstacle.

K – *(Laughs.)*

T – *(Laughs.)* What if it *never* works?

K – *(Laughs.)* I don't know, I guess I'm scared of it, but at the same time, I am who I am. I don't know, I have these passions, this passion to be a teacher so why would I have these passions if I wasn't meant to be a teacher? If I wasn't meant to use it. And so I feel like maybe it's wrong and maybe it's just a fear that is in the back of my brain, but at the same time, it's still a fear and it's still knocking.

This core reflection session represented a turning point in Katie's student teaching. She confronted her feelings of uncertainty (e.g., "What if it never works?") and began to speak of "not changing who I am" while simultaneously recognizing the paralyzing nature of getting overly "caught" in "what's best":

K - I guess the internal obstacle would be, I don't have a specific structure and I don't know what the best is and so sometimes I hold myself back because I get so caught up in would this be better or would this be better? What makes one management strategy better than another? Management is always my biggest killer. *(Laughs.)* And I don't know what the best way is, so I hold myself back too because I don't know what to do.

T - Since you don't know what to do, what do you do?

K - Freeze. *(Laughs.)* I think that's the biggest thing, I just stop. I'm just, "Okay, I'll deal with it later." I'm just gonna stick with what I'm doing, which isn't working, but I

don't know what else to do, so I go back to the sternness.

T - What do you think about that internal obstacle of you freezing?

K - I think I haven't taken the time to think about it because now thinking about it: Why am I doing that? I guess I've never really written or thought about what to do management-wise in my group.

T - How do you feel about these internal obstacles? You have one where you freeze because you don't know what to do and then you have another that is: “They should be better than this."

K - So maybe looking at them more based on what they've shown me rather than what I assumed. Oh I hate that. I assumed something. I'll admit it, I did. Maybe accepting that that was an assumption and looking at their behavior throughout the whole time we've been meeting. Getting rid of some of those inappropriate beliefs would make me calmer and I wouldn't be so stressed out if we get a little off topic. And then adding that structure of some sort that I can take from online from what other people are doing and make it my own, then I would have a structure. And maybe not being so stressed out. But again, right before I started my [reading] group, Ms. Michaels said, again, she is very stern, she told me, “These kids like to talk out, so you have to be able to take money for every time they talk out.” I hate doing that. But I sometimes I resort to that because I don't want to get off task. Maybe kind of letting go of some of that and letting myself more in it and getting rid of some of the unreal expectations that I created in my own head based on assumptions. Maybe that would make it a little easier and I wouldn't be as worried.

In the above excerpt, Katie began to recognize the discourses she turned to during moments of uncertainty and how these discourses informed her expectations of student behavior and her assumptions of how she should react to these behaviors. She referred to this as "letting myself in more" rather than simply mimicking her cooperating teacher's "stern" demeanor. In response to recognizing the ways this discourse may have limited her, she began to formulate a counter-discourse to some of the discursive obstacles related to her expectations of students and herself. In the next section I discuss some of the other counter-discursive measures Katie and I reflected upon during her student teaching.

Counter-Discourse: "Tuning in to What My Students Need"

As student teaching progressed, Katie spoke more and more of "falling back" on her core qualities to "Tune in to what My Students Need" during moments of uncertainty. In these moments, she attempted to draw upon her core qualities rather than solely listening to discourses of "Doing the Right Thing" and "These Kids Should Just Know Better." She referred to her core qualities as a "tool" to help her bring about her counter-discourse:

> I like that I have that tool to fall back on, especially the empathy one. Even though it's sometimes I don't like it. I don't like being...it's kind of pain sometimes...feeling other people. Feeling stressed when I see other people stressed. That's not fun, but at the same time, I'm able to tune in to what my students need from me. So I think that's a really good thing to use.

The realization that Katie wanted to use empathy as a tool to give students what they need from her, rather than expecting them to conform to her beliefs, was encountered during a core reflection session on what Katie perceived as Brad's "disrespect":

T – [So Brad] is doing certain behaviors and that's an external obstacle, but your beliefs about the behaviors are "I'm being disrespected right now." And you're feeling frustrated and it makes you mad. What do you think about the "I'm being disrespected right now" belief?

K - Maybe hearing you say it made me feel like maybe I'm jumping to conclusions. Maybe it's a cry for help and I'm just not helping him. Maybe I'm seeing it one way and he's not intending it that way. Maybe something else is going on with him. And he didn't want to take homework home…Oh my gosh. I'm thinking about one time his tutor and I were talking and she told me that he's like, "I can't do this at home with Dad. I can't do it. I won't do it." Because I don't know. I don't know what goes on. And that's what I know. What I know is what he says. And that's how she kind of, in the end, she tries not to use it, but that's how she can get him to get things done is by saying, "Well if you waste your time then you're going to have to do it at home." And he just freaks out, he just doesn't want to do that, but then he'll start doing his work. Like a worksheet that he's been working on for 45 minutes and he only has a half a problem done. When she kind of gets to him finally and says, "You don't do this now, you'll have to do it at home" - he'll get done in three minutes. He can do the work. He just chooses not to. Maybe he didn't want to take it home because he was really afraid what was gonna happen when he got home. Maybe he didn't want to deal with a fight. And I just completely overlooked that.

T - All this empathy is coming out now. Whereas before you were being, "I'm being disrespected." Does this sound like a true thing?

K - It does. It really, really does. I guess just hearing somebody else. Hearing my

thoughts come back at me was just eye opening. Oh my goodness. I guess I don't really have any reason. I don't know. I can believe that he's being disrespectful. Or I can not believe that he is. There's always reasons for why people do things. And I wasn't seeing that. So I want to try to see that. I want to try to reach him. Try to show him that I'm trying to understand him. I might not understand him, but to show him that I really want the best for him and that I'm on his side. I'm not just another person telling him what to do. Another person disciplining him. Maybe that can make a difference.

More and more during the latter stages of Katie's student teaching, her tone towards students and classroom management took on a tone more representative of the above excerpt. She spoke of "taking a breath" and trying to see things from students' perspective rather than immediately defaulting to an angry and defensive posture:

> At least I've not gotten mad with him. I've been able to keep my cool and be collected and try to use the empathy thing...just thinking, "Okay, I just need to use my empathy." And sometimes I'll start to forget and then there's something like, one of the things [Brad's] been coming back to a lot recently, which today he didn't bring up, but recently it's been that he's been homesick and that turned out to be, 'cause I asked him why he was homesick and told me it's because he hasn't been at home, he's been at Grandma's for nine days. Turns out that's not true. He lied to me because he was actually with Dad the whole time. And Marie and I were talking about it and it seems he keeps saying he's homesick and that his stomach really hurts [because] he's really starting to go into a sad place. He's been kind of been denying the fact that Mom's gone and now it's kind of coming back. And so that has been something I've been trying to keep in my mind.

> Today even, I'd remind myself: "He's going through things, it's not just a normal situation." So I'm doing better about not getting mad.

Rather than feeling "disrespected" by his lying, Katie instead used her empathy to view Brad in a different light. She used this new vantage point to help her "keep her cool" and work with him in ways that he needs.

Katie also discussed applying empathy and creativity as aids to classroom management. In the core reflection session that opens this chapter, she spoke of employing empathy to notice student confusion and to then use creativity to think of ways to include students in her instruction rather than simply forging ahead without their input:

> I'm going to use my empathy [to know to] pull up those students who are giving me the "What? What's going on?" and I would have them walk through it as the class watches as the class is following along. And I would use that. I could just feel myself just putting on the "ignore" on that ["I'm never gonna get this right"] thought and just [instead] thinking, "I'm doing the best I can."…I think I need to keep that in mind because…throwing them out there [to do the activity] when I know they're not getting it—but I just make them do it anyways. That's not gonna work. But finding a way to ignore that and not give into the fear, "Oh [my supervisor] is gonna be so mad if I don't get the exact lesson that's [on my lesson plan] done." Just kind of deviating if I have to.

Prior to core reflection, Katie seemed fixated on the "discourse" of "doing the right thing," but at the conclusion of this session she began to speak back to this discourse by focusing on her empathy and creativity as a means of meeting the needs of her students rather than her own. By the end of her student teaching, she began to adopt her own empathetic classroom management style, independent of anything we discussed in core reflection. In our final interview, rather than

"falling back" to the "stereotypical" stern approach, she instead mentioned using "I statements" to create an empathetic response from her students. Katie provided one example when I asked her how this approach might play out in her class. To a "rowdy" class she might say: "You guys are upsetting me because you're not listening and at the same time I'm worried we aren't going to get through this…just to show them that I wasn't just being a drill sergeant telling them do this, this, and this."

Core Reflection and the Phenomenon of Learning to Teach

The beliefs Katie articulated as obstacles coalesced around two larger discourses. As problematic as these discourses were, she nevertheless turned to them in moments of uncertainty. One of these was an internally persuasive discourse regarding her views on what students should know (i.e., "These Kids Should Just Know Better"), discourses I surmise may have been informed by her socialization into teaching and learning. The second discourse took a more authoritative tenor, that of "doing the right thing." This discourse played a role in how Katie evaluated herself as a teacher. Over the course of Katie's student teaching, core reflection illuminated a counter-discourse, "Tuning in to What my Students Need." With these discourses in mind, this section looks at some of the lessons Katie may have learned through these discursive encounters and how these lessons may be expanded upon based on what we know about teacher education, specifically Katie's experience of coping with uncertainty in the areas of occupational socialization and evaluation of teaching.

Socialization

In our early conversations, Katie mentioned on a several occasions how she did not understand students' lack of "common sense," their lack of remorse when disciplined, and, in the case of Brad, his lack of respect. Often she would follow up these comments by saying

something similar to, “I just don’t get that because I’m not like that” or “I never was that way when I was in school” or “I’ve never been in a class where people had that attitude.” Much of these thoughts seemed to be informed by Katie’s biography. This biography seemed at least partially to lend credence to Katie’s internally persuasive discourse of “These Kids Should Know Better,” and this made it easier to turn to during moments of uncertainty. As Britzman (1986) reminded us, teachers “bring their implicit institutional biographies - the cumulative experience of school lives - which, in turn, inform their knowledge of the student’s world, of school structure, and of curriculum” (p. 443). Certainly the behaviors of Katie’s students could be interpreted in a number of different ways, but she initially seemed to rely on interpretations that were more resonant with her internally persuasive discourses. This is problematic because such discourses often result in teachers seeing what they want to see (Loughran, 2001). In this case, without reflection, Katie’s internally persuasive discourse of “These Kids Should Know Better” acted as an experiential filter. This filter resulted in her seeing some of her students as choosing to withhold respect or remorse when redirected during off task behavior.

As Katie began to evoke a counter-discourse of giving students what they need, I noticed a shift in the ways she described her interactions with students. She summarized this change as approaching students with more “openness-mindedness” rather than taking behaviors personally:

> Just going in [to teaching] with more open-mindedness. I think [core reflection] helped me to do that because, again, I was able to see more of the bigger picture, rather than what was in front of me, like with Brad. Time and time again he would just have his head down and at the beginning of student teaching it was unbelievably frustrating. And I think it was still frustrating at the end of student teaching, but I was able to like not take it as a personal assault kind of thing. I was able to use my core qualities to be flexible

> with him and I never raised my voice. I would tell him to go to the back table or I would try to think of it as maybe something is going wrong with him and so I was really taking the time to really look at those [obstructing beliefs] and what was keeping me from using my core qualities.

Katie remarked how core reflection helped her go into teaching with more "open mindedness" and allowed her to see a "bigger picture" than what her internally persuasive discourse might have suggested. Understandably, these discourses allowed for readily available interpretations of her students' behavior and were tempting to draw upon during times of uncertainty, but through reflection, Katie began to interrogate her internally persuasive discourses and began to see their limitations. This interrogation allowed her to begin to consider ways to tap into a counter discourse using empathy. By the end of her student teaching, Katie began to see this approach pay dividends with Brad:

> Before it was just very closed off [with Brad] and it's opened up a lot since then. Even my last week he was like, "Miss W, did you see your desk?" And there was an apple on my desk for me. It's just little things, like I could get him to work on a worksheet by the end. Before that it never could have happened. He was opening up to me a little bit. Not a lot, but for Brad that was more than I could have ever expected.

At the beginning of student teaching, Katie had to contend with internally persuasive expectations related to Brad's disrespect, but he ended up exceeding her expectations by the end. According to Katie, this was due, in part, to her efforts to show greater empathy in the interest of giving Brad what he needed from her.

Evaluation

Katie also had a desire to do things "right" without "being told," despite the fact that it was not clear to Katie what this "right" approach would be. Nevertheless, she seemed motivated to adopt this stance, in part, by her desire to win the approval of Ms. Michaels and, to a lesser extent, her university supervisor. For example, she wished to achieve greater esteem in the eyes of her cooperating teacher by being "more stern." Certainly such a belief is at least partly informed by an internally persuasive belief that "all teachers must be stern." Many young teachers come into teaching believing they must "present a stern face, be distant from learners, insist on strict adherence to rules…and demand accuracy without taking learners' perspective into account" (Sugrue, 1997, p. 215). These sorts of beliefs initially made it difficult for Katie to bring about empathy while also being "stern." For Katie, it seemed, these sorts of beliefs fit under an authoritative discourse of "Doing the Right Thing."

Sternness as the "right thing to do" during moments of uncertainty initially put Katie at odds with her core quality of empathy. Unsure what how to reconcile empathy with being stern, Katie sought to embody sternness at the expense of empathy and flexibility. This may have been due in part to the "all or none" nature of a "right" way of teaching—Katie seemed to feel she was either "right" or "wrong" in her instructional choices. Such a discourse presumes a binary that marginalizes the intermediate stages of learning that are necessary for reconciling the kinds of tensions with which Katie grappled. Katie created in her mind an ever watchful cooperating teacher and university supervisor, both intent on seeing Katie do the "right thing" to the point of inflexibility. This seemed to create a related discursive binary that said: "Do it right or not at all." At least in the early stages of Katie's student teaching, this discourse may have slowed the experimentation needed for learning and, instead, manifested as a belief that told her she should be perfect in her teaching. During core reflection, Katie and I learned her response to this

perfectionistic discourse, at times, was to "freeze" and "fall back" to what she thought a teacher would "stereotypically do" in the situation.

Scholars have found this "falling back" to a cooperating teacher's "traditional style" to be common among student teachers (Hewson et al., 1999; Ross, 1988; Winitsky et al., 1992). Moreover, those who subscribe to traditional styles of teaching end up taking a more authoritative stance towards their students during the first few years of their teaching careers (Hoy & Rees, 1977; Ng, Nicholas, & Williams, 2012; Veenman, 1984). I noticed Katie trying on these "styles" during moments of uncertainty. In her efforts to interrogate her tendency to "fall back" to traditionally authoritative stances, Katie seemed to not only wrestle with the kind of student teacher she was going to be, but also, perhaps the kind of teacher she was going to be in the first few years of her teaching career, if not indefinitely.

Korthagen and Evelein (2015) called this "falling back" phenomenon *downloading*, which is "taking action without awareness, or of routine and automatic actions" (p. 149). They concluded, through citing Shön (1987), that downloading results in "tackling situations from routine because of the constant pressure to act," regardless of whether or not these produce positive results (Korthagen & Evelein, 2015, p. 150). While I do not sense Katie would refer to her "stern" reactions as ones which were "routine" for her, she retained the tendency to grasp for teaching routines round in her apprenticeship of observation, most notably during moments of uncertainty. Unfortunately, as Glickman and others (2010) reminded us, such a stance discounts a "complex environment" and leaves a teacher who "cannot adjust to multiple demands and is not helped to acquire the abilities to think abstractly and autonomously [which leads to a] simplifi[ed] and deaden[ed] instructional environment" (p. 70). I saw this "lack of adjustment"

manifest as a strict adherence to Katie's lesson plan; a rigidity based mostly on a fear of doing her lesson "wrong" in front of her university supervisor or cooperating teacher.

Addressing Uncertainty with Core Reflection

During our sessions, Katie seemed principally concerned with the ways she was being evaluated, so during one session I redirected her to reflect upon a lesson that she found particularly inspiring. She pointed to one creative science lesson that she felt safe to explore due to Ms. Michaels's general *laissez-faire* attitude towards science curriculum and instruction (due to science not being evaluated on state standardized tests). A recollection of Katie's lesson along with the core qualities she brought to the table allowed her to see the merits of not repressing her creativity:

> Today I did a science lesson and just seeing their smiles about the anticipation of seeing what's gonna happen, just I love that. That is so exciting to me. Just getting them all excited. Not riled up where I can't get them under control, but purely happy about what their learning or what's about to happen….being a good teacher, I would be able to...not have to change who I am, but have the students under control. Like have an understanding with them that, when I have to pull their card or do negative things, I don't want that to…I want them to take it seriously and understand that it's not that I don't like them, but that they may need to stay on task and that's important. I just want to be able to have those engaging lessons.

Rather than getting caught in a belief regarding whether her "authentic self" is "ever gonna work" or whether she had the "right" personality to be a teacher, Katie began to address uncertainty by reflecting on the qualities that came up during a successful lesson. This reflection brought up the ways in which she could create engaging lessons for students while at the same

time “have an understanding with them” regarding the consequences of off-task behavior. This session reflected a slight shift in how she thought of her lessons. Instead of solely focusing on pleasing her cooperating teacher, she began to focus more of her attention on using her core qualities to engage students:

> Like I said, I get really stuck in a rut, and I will just fixate on things and not let them go. And I was able to step back, away from the rut and think about it from a different perspective. Maybe this happened. Maybe [my students] felt my tension. Maybe it was a little bit of me. Maybe I could have done this better and help keep them stay on track. I was able to step back and not be like a wounded animal. I was able to look at [problem situations] from my human side.

Instead of getting “stuck in a rut,” Katie worked with challenging students as less of a “wounded animal,” and more from a calmer, “human” space. In this space, forecasting uncertain teaching outcomes meant expanding beyond “right or wrong” and “fight or freeze.”

Katie also made note of the difference core reflection made in the ways she addressed the emotional dramas associated with teaching and how it also helped her self-assess her teaching. She pointed out how she would turn to core reflection during these moments:

> I felt like when I would get really frustrated, the core reflection, I was able to draw on it. And so I would think how I wasn't seeing the whole picture or what beliefs were stopping me from seeing the whole picture: What obstructions were keeping me from using my core qualities? And so I did that quite often where I would take a breath and be like, “Okay, what am I doing here? What is off? Why do I feel frustrated?” And I'd really think about it. Whereas I don't think, starting off this semester, I didn't do that because I didn't think about doing that. I might take a breath and think “I need to reevaluate,” but

> then it wouldn't change because I wouldn't know how to reevaluate, so it changed the way I evaluated.

As the above except suggests, core reflection not only created a space for navigating the emotional landscape of uncertainty, but it also seemed to help her re-evaluate her instructional choices in those same moments. Instead of downloading during moments of uncertainty, she self-assessed how she was navigating the obstacles she faced and reconsidered the ways she managed uncertainty. McVarish and Milne (2013) argued that self-assessing in this way "affords students opportunities to be more fully present in their learning than would be possible with other forms of summative evaluation" (p. 9). They warned, however, that there is a certain amount of metacognition necessary to think about one's evaluation and, thus, self-assessment can be either too abstract, intimidating or confusing for many students, due to the fact that they have yet to "learn how to reflect" (p. 33). Yet, in this instance, core reflection seemed to provide Katie a structure to reflect on ways in which she can self-assess her instruction rather than relying solely on outside evaluations:

> I would be at school and be like, "Hmmm…I wonder how I'm using my core qualities right now?" *(Laughs.)* Like during prep period I would be sitting there grading something and be like, "How could I have used my empathy more this morning because this wasn't a very good morning." Just things like that. I would kind of find myself thinking about it. By the end of [student teaching], I was almost trying to think about it any time [I created a lesson]. I would be like, okay, what if this happens. And I was trying to think about ways I would deal with different situations that could come up.

In this instance, Katie began to not only retroactively reflect on her instruction, but also draw on her core qualities in the moment and, additionally, proactively lesson plan to bring about her core qualities more fully in the future.

Summary

Katie's desire to "just do the right thing" is certainly an admirable position, but her approach towards it, particularly during uncertain moments of teaching, seemed to block her from maximizing her potential. To approach teaching according to a discourse that implies "do it right or not at all" excludes a "work in progress" stance and, in Katie's case, caused her to freeze and "fall back" to "stereotypical" ways of teaching. At the same time, this discourse may trickle down to students who do not fit neatly into one of two simple categories, for example, "respectful" or "disrespectful." In Katie's case, it seems that core reflection may have played a role in ameliorating these polarizing discourses.

All of this being said, core reflection is not a quick fix. Due to the palimpsest nature of discourse (see Chapter 2), Katie's beliefs did not radically change over the course of our eight core reflection sessions. In our last interview, she still spoke of students occasionally being disrespectful and still spoke of avoiding group work activities to appease her cooperating teacher. These discourses persisted, but, rather than solely relying on internally persuasive and authoritative discourses, she now had a counterdiscourse to consider as an option during moments of uncertainty. Katie also seemed to become more aware of how her beliefs limited her range of possibilities when working with students. She also began to explore the ways she could choose a more expansive and positive path for her teaching:

> Every week, no matter what was going on, I would come in here and really think through things and what it meant for the way I was teaching and how I could use my strengths.

> Because I tend to come at it from the negative side of things at times, where, "I can't do this and I can't do that." And looking at it, you told me at the beginning, "Well it's more of looking at your strengths and finding ways to use them." And I was like, well that sounds positive. That's a good thing. I wasn't really sure how that would work. And I think the more that I got familiarized with it, I was just so happy that I decided to start doing [core reflection]. I started using it outside of our meetings and it was just a really good way to think about education. You come against problems every single day, if you're negative about them, you're gonna have a really rough go. And so, finding ways of pulling my empathy and pulling my creativity, even throughout the day, it was just a real help.

In the time Katie and I worked together, she began to resolve the tensions associated with the internally persuasive discourses on what students "should know" and the authoritative discourses of what it means to teach in the "right" way. For Katie and many young teachers, this is a work in progress and our work together using core reflection may have aided in this work. This chapter suggests, as Sugrue (1997) argued, that teacher educators "should enable student teachers to surface these tensions and facilitate their resolution rather than provide general prescriptions" (p. 218). Katie's case indicates core reflection may be one path towards a resolution of discursive tensions brought on by uncertainty.

Last, but certainly not least for Katie, core reflection seemed to play a role in assisting her in looking at problems from her "human side" rather than looking at them as a "wounded animal." Intrator (2006) reminded us that

> classrooms, in particular, are awash in emotional energy and teachers must employ a range of "emotional intelligences" that include discerning one's emotional makeup,

> reading emotional cues, responding to charged emotional situations, monitoring our own fluid emotional cartography, and managing the emotions of others. (p. 234)

During our core reflection sessions, it seemed that Katie began to monitor not only her own "fluid emotional cartography" but that of students such as Brad. This monitoring, in part through her ability to make use of her empathy quality, helped her move away from "falling back" on sternness as a "default" when managing and working with students. Core reflection seemed to help Katie come to terms with a complex web of thoughts, feelings, desires, and beliefs that may have played a role in the choices she made in the classroom, including classroom management (an aspect of her teaching she often considered her Achilles' heel). Katie's new-found success in managing her students using empathy rather than "defaulting" to sternness seemed to be a great relief to Katie. She learned that what was true and authentic to her, in the end, turned out to be the "right" course of action, not only for her, but perhaps also for Brad and many of her other students.

Chapter 5: Allison

Allison – We will practice until they do it so well that I can reward them. And then we can work on their music and have my plan and know it well enough so it can be fun. And if they ever have bad posture or if they start talking then we will just do [the stand up and sit down procedure] again.

Tom – Can you see how your qualities [of authenticity and creativity] are coming out? I can't see them as well, so I wonder [without those] if you are gonna stop yourself [again] if the class goes off track?

A - I don't know, I don't know. I might get nervous and say, "Be quiet," and not have them sit.

T - So I just saw [the internal obstacle of "I'm worried they aren't going to listen to me"] just then. You're like, "Be quiet." *(Mimics Allison looking down sheepishly.)*

A – *(Laughs.)*

T - Now, suddenly you're being blocked again. It doesn't feel like you mean it as much because you're looking down and being self-deprecating about it.

A - Maybe I should just have them be silent the whole time and if they make any sound, just for maybe tomorrow, if they make any sound, sit and stand, instead of wait.

T - Is that what your ideal looks like? Everyone is silent?

A - I think that would make things go a lot easier. Maybe not every day has to be like that, I think in order to reel them back in, because they all start to talk to a couple friends that sit next to them.

T - It might be worth it to see if you can get that flow going. Be more authentic in what you are saying. But you will be confronted with the feeling of "I'm being 'bitchy' right

now" because to say "no one can talk," that's gonna feel...

A - That's how it feels.

T - So you'll be faced with this obstacle very quickly because they are going to test you, right? And then you'll be, "Oh no, they're not listening to me" and then get sucked into [the obstacle].

A - Or I can just be like, "You better listen to me." *(Laughs.)*

T - Well...if that's your/[1]

A - /otherwise they're gonna be sitting and standing all day.

T - And that's [a] persistence [quality].

A - And I did that with the varsity singers: "We can do this all day." And they're like, "We're doing it, we're doing it." And I'm like, "Yeah, 75% of you are doing it right, but there's a few of you that aren't. We all have to do it together. We can do it all period." And then probably we did one or two after that and then they did it right.

T - So it worked with them, right?

A - And I didn't really feel bitchy with them, even when that guy was like, "What's your problem?" I was just like, "All I'm doing is making you sit and stand; it's really not that hard." *(Laughs.)* And that's what great choirs do. So, if you want to be a great choir. I had to do that in a top level choir. It's not because you guys are kids, it's because that's what will help you focus. If you can do it together then it will unite you. One of the girls asked, "Why are we doing this? It doesn't make any sense." And I didn't have an answer for her, so I just ignored it and tried to think of an answer.

[1] Indicates interruption

T - So is that your answer? What you told me just now?

A – *(Nods.)*

In the above core reflection excerpt, the foundation of Allison's ideal seemed to be partly informed by expectations passed down to her from her own apprenticeship of observation—namely, that her students need to reach the level of "great choir" and strategies such as sustained silence and "standing up and sitting down" repeatedly are ways to achieve this goal. The belief Allison seemed to have carried into this reflection ("practice makes perfect" as the path towards "greatness") was a belief which partly seemed to mirror the demands of her own music schooling experience. Rather than using her core qualities (e.g., authenticity and creativity), she pushed them aside to instead enact a discourse that called for the kind of greatness her schooling suggested. She could have instead attempted to follow her instincts of using authenticity and creativity to forge an ideal more in line with her mission for teaching (i.e., building a community of learners). Yet, in the interest of taking the seemingly "easier" path to address an uncertain situation, she imagined a solution she believed would result in a "great choir." In terms of discourse, Allison relied upon a familiar authoritative discourse rather than working from a counter-discursive space.

Had she followed through with it, "demanding silence" may have produced the "great choir" she sought to inspire, but this approach seemed incongruent with her core qualities and mission for teaching. Despite sensing this incongruity, I followed her lead by pointing out additional qualities (e.g., persistence) every time she proposed a new ideal. By the end of our sessions, we usually arrived at what Allison believed was a sound strategy, but the method through which we arrived at this ideal remained at the level of "trial and error" and, thus,

awareness of how she may draw on her qualities when the unexpected happened seemed to elude her. Her inability to see her qualities became apparent to me when I challenged her by asking "what if the class goes off task?" When challenged by an uncertain student response, Allison seemed to forget and/or lacked confidence in the ideal she had created, quickly consulted with discourses we previously identified as internal obstacles, and, thus, recreated the problem situation.

As this chapter explores, several factors conspired to bring about this type of core reflection experience. Though I discuss these factors and their consequences in greater detail later in this chapter, one of the primary factors was our inability to escape authoritative discourse, even within the confines of our sessions. I also examine how Allison eventually drew on her authenticity and creativity with greater consistency and this assisted her in amplifying and putting into action a revised internally persuasive discourse. Rather than countering the discourses she encountered, Allison found extending and modifying her internally persuasive discourse to be more a feasible option for addressing uncertainty.

About Allison

Unlike Katie, Allison Benge immediately began student teaching at the start of the school year. Due to a compressed ten-week student teaching schedule (Allison's teach abroad program required an abbreviated domestic student teaching experience), she began teaching multiple classes on her own from the first day onward. As a vocal performance student, Allison's education took place under the tutelage of the university music school, distinct from a teacher education program, and this supervision continued through student teaching. Student teaching took place within a large ethnically diverse high school near a large Midwestern city, the same city within which Allison was born and grew up. Though Allison began teaching the "lower

level" choirs "from day one," her cooperating teacher, Ronald Thurston, seldom allowed her opportunities to independently teach the "upper level" and gospel choirs, preferring to co-teach these classes instead.

Allison and I met the week before her student teaching was to start in late July. In this initial meeting I noticed she was a bit more reserved than Katie and thus answers had to be coaxed from her a little more. Despite what I observed as a more introverted personality, Allison described herself as "more of an outgoing personality" than Mr. Thurston, whom she described as "brilliant," but "intimidating." After growing up in a "musical family," Allison enrolled in the prestigious Stephens Music School, which was the same school from which Mr. Thurston, whom she described as a "star student," had graduated. At Stephens, Allison felt she "had to keep up with her peers" to fit in with the high standards and reputation of the school and the competitive nature of the school left her with what she described as a rebellious "edge" to her personality.

Even before student teaching, Allison was hesitant to commit to teaching. She specifically cited how she disliked the ways state and federal laws, in her estimation, had restricted teacher autonomy. She spoke of a desire to instead become a music producer (which she found analogous to teaching music) if teaching high school did not work out for her. Though she said she "liked that [Mr. Thurston] was leaving it all up to me to do what I want with" students, she also expressed reservations regarding Mr. Thurston's "sink or swim" style of mentorship. Ultimately she concluded his approach would be "good for me because I can develop my own teaching style."

Core Reflection with Allison

Though much of what Allison experienced during core reflection was similar to Katie's experience, the variances in approach made for an interesting contrast to Katie's. In this section

I will highlight some of the more prominent differences. From early on in her student teaching, Allison seemed receptive to core reflection though not quite as outwardly enthusiastic about it as Katie. If Katie's circumstances made for an ideal core reflection experience, Allison's circumstances could be considered more challenging. Allison only had ten weeks of student teaching at Eastside High School before traveling to New Zealand in October to finish her student teaching and, as a result, our time frame was more compressed than I had initially anticipated.

The compressed time frame forced us, on occasion, to schedule interviews or IPR sessions directly following a core reflection session and this "doubling up" may have played a role in Allison feeling, at times, "jumbled" during core reflection. This "jumbled" experience may have also been a result of Allison coming into our sessions with several interrelated problem scenarios in mind. Of all the participants in this study, Allison seemed to experience the greatest difficulty in classroom management. Therefore, we often spent the first several minutes of our sessions boiling down her thoughts to one concrete problem situation because she usually had several interrelated problems in mind. When this phenomenon occurred, I usually recommended that she try to find a concrete "tipping point" which exemplified the moment when her situation took a turn for the worse. My efforts to help make things more concrete, however, may have constrained and confused the possibilities for reflection since Allison later admitted she felt pressure to give answers to questions that would lead us to subsequent core reflection steps:

> There is [sic] a lot of times where I'm confused because I'm trying to figure out what you're looking for. I'm not sure really how you want me to answer them. When you're asking how I am thinking or feeling I always have so many thoughts in my head that I

don't know which ones to tell you and I don't know which ones are good for what you're looking for, to [make] a bit of a path [to the next step of core reflection].

This "looking for the next step" represented another manifestation of "solution thinking." In this case, Allison was not only thinking of how to address her problem situation, but she was also thinking of how to move us to the next step. While making the problems and ideals as concrete as possible are important parts of core reflection, this example demonstrates the additional importance of encouraging a participant to remain in contact with each step rather than thinking about subsequent steps.

In making these problems more concrete, we usually arrived upon some kind of classroom management issue. For example, in one session, Allison described a situation where her students were "really confused" about a music theory concept she was teaching and many of these students were speaking out regarding their confusion. Allison also mentioned how her supervisor had observed this lesson and how she had not realized how poorly it had gone until her supervisor pointed it out to her. I could see multiple potential problems here – we could have reflected upon classroom management, her choice of instructional strategies, or the fact that she did not realize it went poorly until her supervisor had told her. Nevertheless, I kept in mind that "core reflection is built upon the [participant's] concerns," and so I attempted to help Allison disentangle her problem to find her core concern, including the point at which this scenario began to diverge from the outcome she wanted (Korthagan & Vasalos, 2009, p. 13).

As the excerpt at the outset of this chapter exemplified, Allison's ideals often underwent significant revision throughout our core reflection sessions. This process of constant revision was due, in part, to her ideal being grounded in finding "the answer" rather than allowing her core qualities to serve as a foundation. This represents another example of "solution thinking,"

but unlike Katie, it seemed as though Allison had a harder time moving completely away from that way of thinking about her practice. Allison's struggle to find "the answer" seemed to bring about a shape-shifting ideal that may have privileged her supervisor's suggestions (e.g., "don't let students talk") or Mr. Thurston's suggestions (e.g., "try teaching without a plan") rather than her character strengths. In other words, reflecting on ideals with Allison took on a "throwing things at the wall to see what sticks" approach. As a coach in our sessions, I perhaps should have intervened to break this pattern, but rather than asking her to reflect on core qualities and flesh them out in the ideal, I often, in the interest of following her lead, allowed Allison to propose various ideals and would respond by pointing out qualities that seemed to fit her "ideal *du jour*."

Allison's insecurity in sharing out her qualities may have also played a role in our difficulty in naming and using core qualities as the foundation of her ideal. In an IPR session, Allison admitted that she felt "nervous," "insecure," and "vulnerable" when thinking about "letting out core qualities," both during core reflection and in her teaching practice. She asked herself in the same IPR session: "How can I achieve [my core qualities]? How can I let them out?" but then later admitted, "I don't know why I don't feel secure in sharing out the qualities."

Despite these obstacles to core reflection, Allison still seemed to reach a calmer space in our sessions. At the start of a session, she observed she "looked really frustrated" and "pissed," but by the middle part of the session she "was becoming more relaxed." On occasion, Allison also acknowledged the impact the rest of the day had on our reflection: "Overall it was really a nerve wracking day. I auditioned for the opera. I was jittery, but towards the end [of the reflection] I was settled." Given the fact that presence is central to core reflection, this "jittery" feeling possibly delayed contact with Allison's problem situation, core qualities, and her ideal,

which made it difficult to move smoothly through the steps of core reflection and thus may have limited its ability to influence change. Allison reiterated this experience in an IPR session when she commented on how a core reflection session went:

> I felt it was really stunted because it was an abstract problem. But I think that was really helpful because I went back and felt better about what we were doing. I didn't end up doing the things we talked about, but at least I had something to go off of.

For Allison, the process of core reflection served to make her "feel better" about the options available to her and gave her core qualities a reference point (i.e., "something to go off of") for the future, even if she did not always use all of what we discussed.

Discursive Findings

Though the ways I described Allison's experience of core reflection highlight the ways in which it may have restored equanimity, we were also able to illuminate multiple limiting beliefs that seemed to coalesce around two primary discourses. As was the case with other participants, Allison turned to these discourses to make sense of uncertain moments and used them to inform appropriate actions in the classroom. One of these discourses was revealed and expanded upon through our eight core reflections. Over the course of these sessions we discussed six problem situations involving the entire class, another involving an individual student, and another still that involved an inspiring situation. The latter two situations occurred near the end of Allison's student teaching. An authoritative discourse was present in our core reflections and discussed in interviews, but never countered through core reflection. I begin, however, by discussing an internally persuasive discourse Allison often turned to during her student teaching.

Internally Persuasive Discourse: "Being the Cool Student Teacher"

Not unlike Katie, Allison struggled with her position as an authority figure. Unlike Katie, however, Allison's concern was less an "identity crisis" and more about finding a way to be "fun" and "relaxed" while also maintaining a role as an authority figure in the classroom. As such, many of the internal obstacles coalesced around the internally persuasive discourses she held regarding "Being the Cool Student Teacher." For Allison, "being cool" and being a role model were both possible and desirable places to be and her eyes lit up when she described the moments she inhabited that space in her student teaching:

> I was sitting for a music recital and this was one of the cool parts of teaching, a group of these girls came over and sat next to me just 'cause I was the cool student teacher. We were just having conversations, talking like girls, so that was fun. And then we were talking about this thing called *J.E.L.* and how they have *Chic-Fil-A* and *Pizzarena*. And I was like, "Oh my gosh, *J.E.L.* sounds dope." *(Laughs.)* And one of the girls was like, "Did you just say *J.E.L.* sounds dope? Oh my god, I love that." So that kind of stuff is...I'm still pretty close to their age, but I still feel like I could be a good role model and separate what's appropriate and not appropriate and I think that's actually more meaningful because I am closer to their age. So maybe they will see it as, "Oh maybe it really is inappropriate" as opposed to, "Oh, it's a teacher telling me."

Many of our core reflection sessions boiled down to how Allison wanted to bring about this level of rapport and sense of community with her students and what she could do to bring about more of these types of communal moments in her classroom. Allison's comments suggested she anticipated her students learning more from her based on how she was "cool" (i.e., relaxed and fun loving) and part of their "community" rather than just because she was a teacher.

Yet Allison struggled with how to integrate her notions of being "fun" and "relaxed" into her classroom management approach. Allison wanted to use the right kind of leverage to keep students engaged, but she worried about being too "mean" and "turning her students off" on the idea of her as a teacher and role model. Her search for leverage sometimes left Allison wondering how she could be both "fun" and "a disciplinarian," and this uncertainty led her to occasionally frame her efforts to be "fun" as an obstacle:

> T - And the thing is, try not to get so hung up on "I have to change the obstacle." The obstacle is just there, you have the sense that "I'm worried I might not be good at [classroom management]." You can choose whether or not to get sucked into it and just let it become the problem or you can choose to go, "Okay, that's an obstacle and a belief that I sometimes have." And then you go, "I'm gonna choose to use my strengths." Choose to use my authenticity or try to be fun.
>
> A - But then trying to be a fun teacher was my problem. Because they were talking a lot.
>
> T - Explain to me how that was the problem situation again?
>
> A – No, it was just that I would try to be fun and let them talk. I thought that was how you could be a fun teacher. Because I was never a big fan of those teachers who were like, "Everybody be quiet the whole time." I just really didn't want to be one of those. But then at the same time, they would talk too much and we couldn't get anything done. And I wasn't really a fun teacher because I was so frustrated.
>
> T - Well that's a separate problem, I think.
>
> A - It's all entangled.
>
> T - Yeah, they are definitely threaded in with each other. Yeah, I wonder about that one, too.

A - But then if I have them stop talking, then I could be a more fun teacher. Which I even noticed when I went in the next day and I was like, “Listen up, you can't be talking like this. We've been talking the last few days and it's gotten increasingly worse and we can't. It just can't happen.” And I started off where I was, “You need to be in your seats by the time the bell rings or I'll take points off of your participation.”

Here I began by paraphrasing Allison’s ideal and core qualities, but she quickly interjected that the core quality we had previously identified as “fun-loving” was actually, in her estimation, problematic. At the same time, her experience as a student told her that she was not “a big fan” of those teachers who took an “everybody be quiet the whole time” stance. As she goes on to say,

I like to talk, too. It’s just so hard when they are talking and they can’t get it back. I hated it when teachers wanted a silent classroom, but I get it. I get it now. I don’t want to be that person, but I’m trying to figure out all the ways to get around it. But nothing’s working for me.

Here Allison’s internally persuasive discourse acted as a space of resistance, but she ultimately resigned herself to the fact that “nothing is working for me.” In the interest of resolving the dichotomy between “no talking” and “fun,” she went on in this same session to acquiesce to the external demands of the situation while also continuing to use her core qualities. She suggested this compromise could be achieved by first asking everyone to be quiet and then “being fun” once the class was under control.

This sort of approach to ideal construction mirrored the one that began this chapter. In this particular session, I noticed Allison openly struggled with the tension between an internally persuasive discourse that asked her to “be cool” and an authoritative discourse that asked her to

live up to standards set by Stephens Music School. Uncertain of how to use her core qualities to "be cool," Allison sought to implement suggestions from Mr. Thurston and her university supervisor, both of whom advised her to "not let students talk." Frequently Allison alternated between resisting and acquiescing to the various suggestions offered by her university supervisor and cooperating teacher, often within the same core reflection session. In many of her core reflection sessions, this toggling back and forth generally lasted until Allison found a way to incorporate both her core qualities and the suggestions of her supervisor and cooperating teacher.

Yet, Allison ended up feeling out of sync with who she wanted to be in the classroom when she attempted to combine her core quality of authenticity and the suggestions of her university supervisor and Mr. Thurston:

> T - Yeah. So you gotta find a way that being a disciplinarian is authentic.
>
> A - Yeah, because how I get frustrated and they can't tell. Or my university supervisor couldn't tell and then he was really mean. [He] was like, "What are you trying to be popular with them or something?" And I was like...*(whispers)* "I don't like you." *(Laughs.)* It wasn't that I was trying to be popular with them, it was just that I don't like being mean. *(Laughs.)* The kid that was the student teacher last fall was one of my peers from [Stephens Music School] and I was asking him for all this advice before I started [student teaching] and he said, "You have to be an asshole from day one." *(Laughs.)* And I was like, "I don't know if I want to do that."
>
> T - So again, it comes back to authenticity. You want to be a disciplinarian, but there's got to be a way that's authentic to you.
>
> A - [Yeah.] That's *my* way.
>
> T - Because otherwise you just feel like an asshole and what's the point of that?

A - I don't want to be. Even when I had to come back down on them for talking the whole time and after my university supervisor was super mean and then I had to address the problem with the class. Like that day, it went a lot better, but then I got done and I asked my teacher [Mr. Thurston] about it and he said, "Yeah, it was good. You were kind of bitchy at one point and that was good." And I was like, "I don't want to be bitchy." *(Laughs.)* That doesn't sound like a good thing to be called. *(Laughs.)*

T - It depends on how you feel in the moment. It's one thing for someone on the outside to look at you and say, "Well, she's being bitchy right now..."

A - But he was saying it as a positive. And I just don't think that's positive. At all.

Allison expressed annoyance with her supervisor who seems to misinterpret her internally persuasive discourse as an effort to "be popular," but by this point of her student teaching she already had begun to ignore her university supervisor on the grounds that he was "sexist." Still Mr. Thurston and her peer from the music school echoed her supervisor's suggestions, yet she admitted she "wasn't sure if she wanted to" follow their advice.

Authoritative Discourse: "Big Shoes to Fill"

While Allison's internally persuasive discourse of "Being the Cool Student Teacher" may have provided some resistance to institutionally sanctioned discourses, an authoritative discourse of "Big Shoes to Fill" remained. Similar to the "Doing the Right Thing" authoritative discourse Katie encountered, an authoritative discourse of "Big Shoes to Fill" set up a "sink or swim" dichotomy that tended to exclude a middle space of learning to teach. What Allison called Mr. Thurston's "sink or swim" approach to mentorship seemed to exacerbate matters, as did Allison's lived experience of the exceedingly high standards of Stephens Music School.

Allison, however, remained unsure as to how to move beyond mere resistance when encountering this authoritative discourse. Our core reflection sessions were able to uncover aspects of this discourse, but Allison completed her student teaching at Eastside High School without ever finding a way to create a counter-discourse. She instead looked to her teach abroad experience as a reprieve from this discourse:

> I think a lot of [my issues during student teaching were related to] pressure from Stephens. My [cooperating] teacher went to Stephens, too, and he was a really good Stephens student—a "try hard." And he composed a song that they still use for the freshmen. So it was a "big shoes" sort of thing. I don't think the pressure will be there when I go abroad, which is why I wanted to do it in the first place. When [Mr. Thurston] asked me: "Why are you studying abroad *this* semester?" Because I can't deal with you people and your pressure. I didn't want to be in that situation the entire time I was student teaching. I felt this [teach abroad] option was a really great thing that I could use to my advantage where I could shine. I have a lot more confidence that I'll be much more impressive over there than I am here.

For reasons I examine later in this chapter, Allison only explained the full extent of the impact of this discourse during interviews and during IPR sessions. Nevertheless, I discuss some of the ways core reflection illuminated aspects of this discourse even though Allison and I never arrived at what either of us would call a sustainable counterdiscourse.

Often this discourse pointed towards Allison's struggle to teach as well as the student teacher who came before her or to teach in a way that would earn the approval of Mr. Thurston, and to a lesser extent, her university supervisor (she admitted she felt she had to implement his suggestions, at least when he was observing her, because he was the one who ultimately assigned

her a grade). Allison's cooperating teacher, however, mostly left it up to Allison to ascertain how to arrive upon that "good" and "right" way to teach and this stance, perhaps, was chief among the problems Allison felt with regards to seeking approval. Making matters more challenging was her belief that she had to measure up to the student teacher that came before her, otherwise she was simply "not good enough":

> T - So we've talked about how you're feeling more authentic and you are having fun [in your ideal]. So what's keeping you from bringing those qualities out? What's blocking that?
>
> A - I'm so focused on the [lesson] plan and doing it right and doing it well. So my teacher and university supervisor will say, "Good job." But then [Mr. Thurston] is like, "There's no right way to do it. You just have to do it."
>
> T - So if we're gonna look at the obstacle in this case: Maybe you feel like you have to be doing everything right?
>
> A - Yeah, I think I need to relax. *(Laughs.)* I think I'm just so hi-strung, trying to do as well as the guy that was there before me. To be good enough for my [cooperating] teacher.
>
> T - So I can see this belief getting a little clearer. You want to be good enough. You want to be as good as the person that came before you. And you have this belief that maybe I'm not.
>
> A - But I believe I'm not. *(Laughs.)* Like I believe it's not possible for me to be good at what I do, but like, I also I believe I gotta be good at what I do. It's a big struggle.

Though Katie struggled with a similar "all or none" belief, partly informed by a comparison of self with others, Allison's beliefs seemed more institutionally informed than Katie's. On

multiple occasions she spoke of the high standards of the Stephens faculty, the competition among her Stephens peers, the culture of the music department, and the pressures associated with working within these environments. Within this milieu, she believed she was not "good enough" and the way she defined "good" was through the lens of the Stephens Music School. In response, she frequently turned to the advice of those pushing this authoritative discourse and she did this as a way to cope with the uncertainty of whether or not she was "measuring up" to the standards of her cooperating teacher, her university supervisor, and the "guy that came before her." Allison, however, still maintained a space of resistance and sometimes found solace in her internally persuasive discourse because it asked her to "relax," be "fun," and "be cool."

Mr. Thurston seemed to notice the stress Allison was putting on herself and attempted to lessen the pressure by suggesting there is "no right way to teach" and that "you just try something and if it doesn't work, you just try another idea." He also proposed she teach "without a plan" because he felt she was putting too much pressure on herself with regards to completing every aspect of her lesson. Yet, Allison was met with Mr. Thurston's disapproval when she attempted an "unplanned new idea":

> [Students] were complaining when they got in a circle. I anticipated it would be a rough start, but I just didn't have control. When I told my teacher about the whole thing, he said, "Well you didn't think it through." How am I supposed to know what to think through? I thought I thought it through.

In the interest of following Mr. Thurston's advice to "try something," Allison had her students stand in a circle while they sang (a suggestion offered to her by a university professor). A few of her students were not as happy with the change and intermittently disrupted class on occasion to

voice their displeasure. Allison did not anticipate student resistance and thus did not come prepared with strategies to ameliorate it.

Allison's sentiment of "not knowing what to think through" highlights another aspect of the "Big Shoes" authoritative discourse – she seemed to feel expected to fill these "big shoes," but felt, as she described in an interview, that she was not given enough guidance to meet this objective:

> A lot of times I was nervous to even get his feedback. I would ask him a lot at the beginning, like, how do you feel about this? Like the first two times he wrote out entire sheets of paper on what I needed to work on. After that he didn't do that anymore. And he didn't observe my lessons anymore or give me a lot of feedback. And when I finally asked him to observe my lessons, he would. And then give me some feedback. After I reached out to the other [Stephens] professors [for feedback on my teaching], they came and talked with him, because this is his second year of being a cooperating teacher. So [one of them] came out to talk to him. So I was nervous about that because I felt like, I didn't know they were gonna do that. I don't know, I feel like that might have, like, been weird for our rapport. I still don't know what they talked about. I walked in and they were there talking and I could tell they were talking about me, which was awkward. So I sat down to join the conversation, but they didn't include me in anything and then [the university professor] had to leave two seconds later. I thought she was coming for all of us to talk together, but they just talked [without me].

Here the "Big Shoes" discourse took on an almost conspiratorial tenor as Allison described a private meeting between Mr. Thurston and a Stephens professor. Allison was left only to guess what they might have discussed and what they thought regarding her teaching ability.

Near the end of her time at Eastside High, in our final interview, Allison admitted she still was unsure what Mr. Thurston thought of her and her teaching:

> Before I leave, I really want to know, what is it you really think of me, what are my strengths and weaknesses. I don't know what they are right now. I know confidence is my weakness. I know classroom management is my weakness—just because of the sheet he had to fill out. I was trying to decipher what he thought about me because of it. There is not enough on there to do that, he really needs to tell me. I feel so judged because he doesn't tell me, but I think he thinks about things and he is very critical. He judges a lot of what I do. He is critical and not in a "sugar coated" kind of way. In the recording studio [with students] he would say, "That was bad. Let's do it again" or "Alright, well that sucked." And it's always like that. He never "sugar coats" anything which I think is not that great. Sometimes it's necessary, but sometimes he's kind of an asshole.

Though Allison followed this up by saying that she never received the same level of critique that she observed him give to students, she still assumed a less than charitable critique from Mr. Thurston. Allison felt an ever present critical gaze from her cooperating teacher, yet in absence of feedback, she was only left to wonder whether she measured up to Mr. Thurston's and Stephens' "big shoes." Unfortunately, the lack of a definitive answer to her dichotomous question still seemed to bother Allison even at the end of her student teaching. Nevertheless, to the very end, she attempted to measure up to the standards of Stephens Music School, particularly during moments of uncertainty.

Discursive Amplification: "Call and Response"

Initially Allison turned to an internally persuasive discourse of "Being the Cool Student Teacher" as an internal form of resistance to some of the actions suggested by the "Big Shoes to

Fill" discourse, but, partly through core reflection, this resistance began to take on a more action oriented quality and thus, I argue, transformed into a "Call and Response" discourse. That said, Allison still consulted with some aspects of the "Big Shoes to Fill" discourse during those times where she felt unsure about her performance, but by the end of student teaching she was able to speak back to some of its more limiting aspects. Rather than imposing the kind of teacher-centered atmosphere advocated by Mr. Thurston and her university supervisor, Allison began to draw upon a more egalitarian and responsive "Call and Response" discourse to help build the type of classroom community she desired. Unlike Katie, who countered her internally persuasive discourse, Allison learned how to transform her internally persuasive "Being the Cool Student Teacher" discourse into a more expansive internally persuasive discourse of "Call and Response" and this discourse came closer to manifesting the kinds of behaviors she was seeking to express during uncertain moments.

Though Allison and I rotated through a variety of potential ideals during core reflection, in those moments where we got "stuck," we looked to inspirational moments for "real life" confirmation of Allison's core qualities. Early on in her student teaching, she identified her use of "Call and Response" as an inspirational classroom moment:

> A - There was this portion of [my lesson] when I did a "call and response" for a really fun part of that same song, but at the beginning when they're all in unison and it was like a really fun part and I stood up, I played the notes and I sang it. So I sang it first and I snapped the whole time *(begins snapping fingers)* and I was having fun and I had really high energy and I was calling on them and they were singing and everyone was having a great time. So my [university] supervisor said that was the best part of the lesson because then they sang. It really affected their sound and he was like, "It was a whole new choir."

T - So when you're thinking about what your students were doing - they were singing and participating more - do you think that was an ideal for them?

A - I think they enjoyed it, yeah. More than when they have to try to read the music or if they're working on one part at a time. This was a more interactive experience. And then "call and response" is also like a cultural thing for [them] and so maybe they felt more connected to that—which is what I was going for.

This inspirational moment helped us identify Allison's "energetic" and "fun" qualities (the latter we refined to call "authenticity" because we found the word "fun" to be too abstract). We then attempted to apply authenticity to subsequent situations she encountered in the classroom. She also began to consider "Call and Response" as a way to connect to what she calls her students' "culture" and this approach seemed to extend beyond some of the teacher-centered advice offered by her supervisor and cooperating teacher.

In later sessions, we began to talk about how to bring more energy and authenticity into Allison's teaching. Regarding her energetic quality, she remarked that "I don't always feel I have the energy part. I feel like I have to really work to bring it out, but once it works then it flows. When I do have the energy it's always a better day." She went on to give an example of how teaching "flowed" when she applied energy and enthusiasm in the classroom:

Everything just flowed. So we'd move backwards a section and then we'd put those together and then we went back to the very very beginning, which they know really well, I would make them stop and work on it really well because the first time they did it, it was awful. And I was like, "How was that, guys?" *(Lowers voice to imitate male students.)* "Bad." *(Laughs.)* So I was like, "All right, well, let's do it again. Make sure you have your head placed in the right spot and check your posture." So [I] conduct[ed]

how to do it and they sounded a lot better the second time and so we got to sing it all the way through.

Though she seldom used "Call and Response" as an instructional strategy, Allison used her energetic quality to act it out as a form of helping her students assess their own progress. By the end of her student teaching she began to routinely combine authenticity and "Call and Response" as classroom management strategies:

> The classroom management was always an obstacle to authenticity. But when I used my authenticity to manage the classroom, it worked really well because I'd be, "Hey Ladies..." and that's so me and it's authentic to me and it's relevant to them and then they're like, "Yeah!?" then they talked a lot after that and laughed a lot the first time, but once it was established [as a class norm to gain student attention] they learned and they would stop talking after I did that. After they said, "Yeah!?" they would stop talking and it wasn't anything negative, it was actually a positive way to get them to stop talking. So I think that part I used my authenticity and that was a really effective moment.

Rather than becoming caught in being "cool" or in "filling big shoes" of others, Allison began to realize the merits of being true to who she was when working with her students and she did this by bringing in more of her "authenticity" quality.

Core Reflection and the Phenomenon of Learning to Teach

Core reflection with Allison revealed two discourses she turned to during moments of uncertainty: "Being the Cool Student Teacher" and "Big Shoes to Fill." Allison's use of authenticity and enthusiasm, in part, assisted her in refining and sculpting a "Being the Cool Student Teacher" discourse into a more active internally persuasive discourse. Unlike Katie, this amplified discourse still seemed fully internal to a "Big Shoes" authoritative discourse and did

not operate as a counterdiscourse in its expression and application. With these discourses in mind, this section looks at some of the lessons Allison learned through these discursive encounters and how these lessons may be illuminated based on what we know about teacher education, specifically Allison's experience of occupational socialization and learning how to teach.

Socialization

The internally persuasive discourse of "Being the Cool Student Teacher" seemed to arise, at least in part, as a response to an authoritative "Big Shoes to Fill" discourse. This is not uncommon since internally persuasive discourses are a common response to authoritative discourses, even when the "truth" of the authoritative discourse is largely unquestioned by those under its influence (Sullivan et al., 2009). Rather than interrogating the built-in assumption that success was contingent upon "filling big shoes," Allison sought to resist some of the more concrete aspects of this authoritative discourse, such as suggestions to be "bitchy" or an "asshole" with her students. Not only was she advised to take this stance, but some of those whom advised her, such as her university supervisor and cooperating teacher embodied these characteristics in their personality, at least in Allison's estimation. Yet Allison resisted this aspect of her socialization, preferring instead to be "fun" and "relaxed" in her interactions with students in the hopes this approach would foster a sense of community.

Allison expressed ambivalence about adopting a "bitchy" persona. One way this ambivalence showed up in Allison's teaching was a concern whether an authoritative style of classroom management was true to not only her own personality, but also the ways she wanted to relate to students. Stoughton (2007) found this sort of ambivalence common among preserve teachers:

> One of the most frequently expressed sources of this ambivalence was the tension some students felt between an orderly classroom atmosphere and one that was over-controlling, inflexible, and focused too heavily on obedience. What was the line, they wondered, between enforcing of necessary classroom rules and a structure in which compliance is enforced in authoritarian or punitive ways? (p. 1032)

The "line" that Stougton referred to, at least for Allison, it seemed, was centered upon a question she asked her self: At what point do I resign myself to the fact that my desire to be a creative, authentic, and relatable teacher might be incongruent with the demands of being a teacher?

In our core reflection sessions, we spoke about finding ways for Allison to draw on her enthusiastic and authentic qualities to achieve her goals of community, but to do so often put her at odds with some of the ways she was being socialized to teach. Being authentic meant being "cool" whereas the "competitive" culture of Stephens Music School, and the ways her cooperating teacher manifested that culture in "judgmental" and "critical" ways, felt inauthentic to Allison. As such, Allison's experience of socialization seemed to be one where she was caught between traditions and change (Britzman, 2003).

Allison found this struggle resulted in uncertainty in how to find a connection between the ways her supervisor and Mr. Thurston expected her to manage the classroom and how her students responded better to a "Call and Response" manner of teaching. This kind of tension is not uncommon among student teachers (Danielewicz, 2001). Allison, however, ultimately decided to be "a teacher [who] teaches who [s]he is" (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). This decision was made easier for her because her supervisor (the primary arbitrator of whether or not Allison passed student teaching) seldom observed her teaching. Moreover, even when he did observe

her, she found that teaching in authentic ways “worked” better for her than his “silent classroom” suggestion:

> When I get feedback from my university supervisor, I feel like I have to do those. Just because he's the one that comes back, the rest of them just come once and give feedback. He always comes back so I feel like I always have to do what he says to get a better review next time. And sometimes I don't agree with it, but I feel like I still have to do it. He doesn't want kids talking at all and that's just not how I like it. I don't mind if kids talk and I like being able to talk back to them. Because if I hear something I just want to be able to respond to it. I don't want to have to ignore them. I don't like that ‘cause that's what my sister would always do to me when I was little. My sisters would just ignore me if I said something and I just felt awful. So I don't like doing that to other people. It is distracting when they're talking, but I just need to find a way to manage it better. And I think I have and it's not perfect, but at least I have an idea where to go for like the flow of the class and the “Hey Ladies...” and if we do get off topic that's fine, but like we need to come back and focus and that's the important part. But for him, I feel like I have to have a silent class the whole time. But he’s not seeing how I run the classroom every day either. And I don't agree with him. *(Laughs.)* So I'm gonna go with my authenticity here. Because I've seen the authenticity work. That's proven. Getting them to stop talking doesn’t work for me.

Certainly there is more than a little bit of “strategic compliance” (Lacey, 1977) implied in Allison’s comments. Perhaps this “performativity” (Bottery, 2003) may be a necessary process in learning how to integrate all of the multiple views of self, a process vital to maintaining a commitment to teaching (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Korthagen, 2004; Palmer, 2007).

Nevertheless, during moments of uncertainty, Allison found a way to act upon an internally persuasive discourse of "Call and Response" that "worked for her."

Near the end of her student teaching, Allison began to integrate an authentic self with a more pragmatic self by looking for common ground between her core qualities and the suggestions of her advisors:

> Sometimes when I come [to our sessions] and talk about my strengths and things, sometimes it's things my supervisors have said in their reviews. And then a lot of times I'll try to use my core reflection qualities and stuff in my teaching in addition to what my teachers have said. And then also in places where they've said I could improve, I'll really pull on my core qualities to overlap [with their suggestions], like a Venn Diagram.

Through this more pragmatic approach, Allison took a more active role in her own socialization to teaching. Allison looked for spaces in her teaching where her qualities overlapped with the suggestions of her supervisors (a varied group of people who observed Allison's teaching that included her university professors, university supervisor, and cooperating teacher) and sought to bring these intersections out in her teaching. This was again suggestive of her applying a discourse interior to authoritative discourse rather than fashioning a counter discourse that may have instead pushed her to "teach against the grain" (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Teaching and Learning

When I asked Allison for an example of an overlap between her core qualities and the suggestions her supervisors provided, she brought up a time she felt confident in her authority:

> I guess when I got the guys to sing really well, which was really funny cause then my [cooperating] teacher went up there and couldn't get them to sing as well as I had gotten them. So that was a pretty cool moment when I used a lot of my authority, but with

> knowledge. I had confidence because of my knowledge. And I was also creative and designed a warm up that really went hand and hand with the assignment that we were working on. And that really got them to transfer all of the things we learned in warm-ups. It really got them to transfer those straight into the piece. Because I designed it to transfer like that. To have that [transition]. That was a point where I used creativity to design the warm up, used my knowledge to design a plan and I also used my knowledge to listen and assess as I was giving the lesson. I felt confident. I felt authentic in my delivery of everything and I felt like I could really be me and let out my own personality and teaching personality and be like funny. Also be confident and know what I'm doing. [I] emit[ted] that sense that, "Follow me and I'll lead you to a good spot."

Allison evoked several different qualities we had talked about in our sessions, some more prominent (e.g., authenticity) in our discussions than others (e.g., authority and creativity) while also mixing in the notion of "using her knowledge" (an aspect of herself that we considered a core quality). When I asked her what caused this shift in her teaching, she attributed it to the knowledge she had received from one of her university professors:

> I had a boost of confidence from an observation from my professor who had given me some ideas so that I could feel confident that they are ideas from someone with experience that might work. And so, it added to my knowledge.

This "boost of confidence" seemed to occur when she found strategies that were "ideas from someone with experience" which, at the same time, also overlapped with some of her core qualities.

In many of our sessions, however, Allison called her "lack of knowledge" an obstacle to bringing in her core qualities, specifically citing her absence of classroom management strategies

as an obstacle to authenticity. Allison sought "strategies from experienced teachers that might work." Mr. Thurston, conversely, seemed to recognize, as Forzani (2014) pointed out, that "teaching is a partially improvisational practice…and that novices must be trained to manage the uncertainty" (p. 3). He attempted to empower Allison to improvise within this uncertain space by suggesting she go in "without a plan" and "just try something and if it doesn't work, you just try another idea." Yet, after Allison's "improvised" lesson failed, he critiqued her for not "thinking things through." Frustrated, Allison commented, "I thought I had thought it through." Here, it seemed Allison was caught between being told what to do and being encouraged to experiment and grow (Berry, 2014) or, in other words, a tension between learning a recipe from an "expert" versus taking responsibility for one's own learning.

Allison's response to this tension seemed to be instrumentalist in its approach: she gathered strategies and core qualities and applying them as needed. She spoke of core qualities as being just another instrument in her "toolbox":

> I put all [the things I'm told by my supervisor, my cooperating teacher, my professors, and core reflection] into a tool box and I pull from it the things that I think are relevant for myself and use it... so if I need a hammer then I can pull out a hammer kind of thing. If I have a foundation that's this is what I need to [have my students] learn and then how am I going to get there. Here's my hammer. Here's my enthusiasm and that's gonna help me to execute this lesson. Or it's, "Hmmm...what is it that I'm really lacking right now? Well I can use my enthusiasm to help me do this."

Allison's "toolbox" approach to teaching calls to mind Lemov's taxonomy, a series of "bite-sized" teaching moves intended to assist teachers in their practice (Green, 2010). The fact that Allison saw her core qualities as another kind of competency, on the same level as some of the

teaching strategies advocated by her "supervisors," partly explains the lack of consistency in the types of ideals she would construct during core reflection.

Several scholars have critiqued the "tool box" or "bite-sized" move approach to learning to teach. Gottileb (2012), for example, said that "teaching is no more a series of 'bite-sized' moves than riding a bicycle is a series of bite-sized moves" (p. 501). Yet, it is hard to fault Allison for seeking tools as a means to address the uncertainties found in her teaching, since McNally and others (2005) reminded us that many novice teachers seek "practical things that will work in the short term, as one of their main objectives is, understandably, to get order in order to teach" (p. 180). Additionally, the sort of "sink or swim" induction suggested by a "Big Shoes to Fill" discourse does not do much to suggest another course of action. As Feiman-Nemser (2001) asserted, discourses such as these "encourage novices to stick to whatever practices enable them to survive, whether or not they represent 'best' practice in that situation" (p. 1014). Indeed, it seemed as though Allison often turned to her tools as a way to stay afloat in a "Big Shoes" discursive environment. Unfortunately, as the excerpt that began this chapter showed, "an overemphasis on 'tips' risks the absence of central principles to guide practice" (Stoughton, 2007, p. 1026).

Addressing Uncertainty with Core Reflection

Allison's "adding to my toolbox" approach to core reflection may have brought an additional layer of difficulty when it came to constructing a robust counter discourse to "Filling Big Shoes." "Call and Response," however, seemed to chip away at some of the more limiting aspects of this authoritative discourse. Yet Allison still felt compelled to perform in ways more in keeping with the "Big Shoes" discourse when her university supervisor was present. Therefore, I question its application as a counter-discourse since Allison felt her best chance of

"shining" and being "impressive" was to remove herself from the pull of the "Big Shoes" authoritative discourse rather than actively countering it in the presence of her supervisors.

Rather than using her core qualities to address uncertainty and inform her ideal, Allison searched for "tools" to pull from a "toolbox." This approach may have made application of an ideal rather tenuous because those moments when her ideal was challenged seemed to result in "downloading," as the excerpt at the beginning of this chapter shows. Downloading may have been due to the fact that Allison regularly commented how she "didn't know" what to do in certain situations. In the face of this uncertainty, she turned to discourses embodied by her supervisors, cooperating teacher, and peers. Each person she turned to offered their own version of "teaching moves" and Allison quickly "reached" for these "moves" during her "downloading" moments.

"Downloading," according to core reflection theory, is problematic because it can start with the competency layer of the Onion Model (see Figure 1 below) without fully considering how these "teaching moves" function in concert with the deeper levels (i.e., mission, identity, beliefs). Core reflection seeks to move a participant from the center of the Onion Model, where core qualities reside, to the last layer (behavior) and beyond (the environment). Alignment of the layers, starting with the core qualities and ending with a participant's behaviors, result in a higher likelihood of flow, but "when there is friction between the different layers, it is more difficult for your core qualities to come out: only a small flow energy is left" (Korthagen & Evelein, 2015, p. 117). The additional energy that may result from alignment of layers could be helpful in creating and maintaining a sustainable counterdiscourse in the face of obstacles that draw their strength from authoritative or internally persuasive discourses. It is too early to say

whether or not alignment between the onion layers helps with creating a counterdiscourse, but such a question is certainly worthy of future investigation.

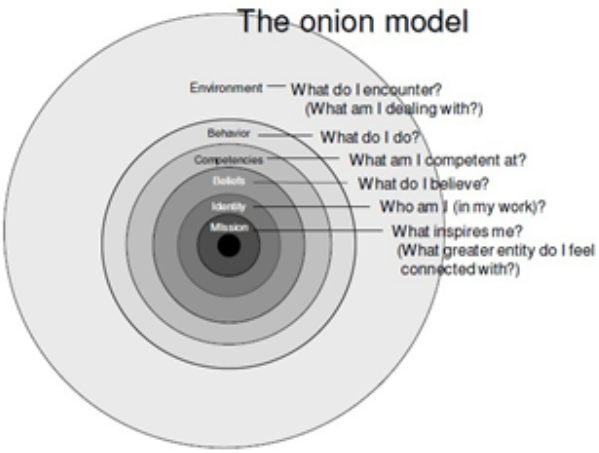

Figure 1: The Onion Model (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005)

In addition to onion layers lacking alignment, Allison also seemed to be unsure how to construct ideals that complemented one another. Similar to alignment among onion layers, alignment among ideals is important for flow (Korthagen and Evelein, 2015). Yet, repeatedly Allison built ideals from an amalgam of ideas gleaned from her cooperating teacher, her university professors, and her supervisors. The fact that her ideals were not always hers may have made it harder to create and employ a sustainable counterdiscourse, particularly during moments of uncertainty.

Finally, another challenge to creating a sustainable counterdiscourse may be the design and implementation of core reflection itself. Core reflection asks a coach to build the reflection "process on the [participant's] own concerns" (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009, p. 13) and this means a participant chooses the problem situation to be reflected upon. Despite interviews suggesting Allison was having problems with her cooperating teacher, she never came into our sessions seeking to discuss a situation related to the pressure she felt from her cooperating teacher, university supervisor, or Stephens Music School. It came up as an internal obstacle on

occasion (e.g., feeling "not good enough"), but not consistently enough to ever build a robust discourse to counter its influence. Perhaps this was because authoritative discourses can be so unquestioned among participants that they may not even see them as obstacles that can be fully articulated, let alone challenged. Perhaps this also meant limiting core reflection to concrete problems precluded discussing more hegemonic and systemic issues. These questions are worth exploring further in future research.

Summary

Ayers (2001) argued, "The challenge of teaching is to decide who you want to be as a teacher, what you care about and what you value, and how you will conduct yourself in classrooms with students" (p. 23). One of the primary challenges for Allison seemed to be authentically navigating the uncertainties of student teaching in a way that would allow her to foster the kind of community she sought in the classroom. She spoke of pressure to conform to certain kinds of behaviors encouraged by those in her program, but she also seemed to feel insecure about the various uncertainties associated with her role as a student teacher. She felt uncertain about the sorts of strategies she should employ, how much she should follow her lesson plans, and even whether or not her cooperating teacher approved of her teaching. Dotger (2015) reminded us that "uncertainty comes in two forms—from the visibility and accountability associated with one's professional responsibilities and from the realization that one's profession is full of situations where decisions are based on often-partial knowledge and actions are taken real-time" (p. 10). Allison seemed to cope with these uncertainties by seeking to fill her "toolbox" with strategies, one of which was "Call and Response."

Though I considered Allison's "Call and Response" internally persuasive discourse to be more tenuous than some of the other counterdiscourses I encountered with other participants,

Allison seemed to consider core reflection and her core qualities as helpful tools nonetheless. She explained that her "qualities are always the catalyst. I'm sure I could get [to my goals] eventually without the core qualities, but I think it helps [me] a lot to be more efficient." In this way, core reflection assisted her in reaching her goals "more efficiently" than she would have been able to do otherwise.

I found it interesting that she used the word "catalyst" to describe core reflection. Part of what we experienced during core reflection was a "disjuncture" between Allison's ideal of inspiring feelings of a shared community between herself and her students and the reality of her struggles to maintain control in the classroom. Stoughton (2007), however, commented that these disjunctures "lead to reflective questioning…and serve as a catalyst for deepened inquiry and thoughtful dialogue" (p. 1033). Despite the disjuncture and the frustrations brought on by "dealing with" the pressure of Stephens, Allison seemed willing to take a deeper look at what was authentic to her and the ways she could bring these out in her teaching. By the end of student teaching she was able to maintain a hopeful view of her future as a teacher, looking ahead to get a chance to "shine" during her teach abroad experience.

We certainly seemed to chip away at the "Big Shoes to Fill" authoritative discourse with an amplified internally persuasive discourse of "Call and Response," yet, as I said in the previous chapter, core reflection is not a quick fix. The authoritative discourse Allison encountered seemed to be deeply felt and had been with her for at least the entirety of the time she had been associated with Stephens Music School. This feeling could have possibly gone all the way back to the beginning of her college career, if not earlier. To anticipate eight core reflection sessions might be able to fully address and counter an authoritative discourse with such deep roots may have been too much to hope for. Yet, if nothing else, Allison often left our core reflection

sessions “feeling better” about the options available to her and her core qualities gave her something to “go off of” in moments of uncertainty and this may have been what she needed most from core reflection.

Chapter 6: Nicole

Nicole - I shared my response to the writing prompt before any of theirs—maybe they needed a model? But it didn't change anything. I don't know what to change except them doing what they're supposed to do and then talking about it. Because I think it could have been something fun to get into. We could have pulled up pictures of different places to show the class, like I had a picture of Ireland that I was gonna pull up, but I didn't because they were completely off track. So maybe I should have just done that first before I did anything else—told them they could pull up a picture, too. Something like that. This is a small group and that would have been possible.

Tom - So I can see you trying to [use your personable quality to] connect somehow because for some reason they're not connecting to what you did this time compared to what you have done before. If there is some way you can use your previous experience of connecting with them—like Eric, he was a hard one to crack. [Ask yourself,] "What kinds of qualities did I use to get connected with Eric?" Because he was so hard to connect to. And thinking about other students you've connected with. How did you connect with them? How can we establish that connection? So does that bring about any thoughts in you in terms of how you might use those qualities?

N - I just really don't know. I didn't start the class any differently than I have in the past. The layout was the same. I talked to a couple [students] and asked how their day was, but nothing was different except for the quote. So maybe we should just blame it on the quote?

T – Well, if everything is the same except for the quote...

N - It's not like I switched the room...

T - No, the main difference was the quote. They did not connect to the quote. Maybe they were like, "That's elitist. I cannot travel." And they were mad. Who knows?

N - I can't travel either! *(Laughs.)*

T - Who knows? You can try to figure it out, but for whatever reason they didn't connect to it. So it's like, "Okay, what seems to be the variable here? In my previous situation, I had these abilities to connect with them and they were engaged. This time everything was the same but they were not engaged. But there was one thing that was different. And it was the quote. They were just resisting it. Right off the bat. Soon as they walked in they were resistant to it." So I think there's a key there.

N - The only thing. It's just such a fun thing to write and maybe it's because they've already traveled. Like maybe it's because they had to leave their home and come here. Most of them. Which is not something I thought would be an issue. But maybe that's it.

As was the case with Katie and Allison, I begin this chapter with an example of Nicole's engagement with core reflection and the ways it may have helped her address uncertainty. The above represents the conclusion of a core reflection session that took place during her English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching experience. In this session, Nicole expressed her surprise regarding her ESL students' lack of receptivity to her writing prompt (a quote related to recreational travel). Despite my attempt to bring her back in touch with her personable quality, Nicole redirected us back to discussing "what went wrong." Rather than attempting to again bring her back in touch with her qualities, I chose to follow her concerns and addressed them as I understood them. By the end, Nicole began to see how her personal preferences (e.g., "It's such a fun [prompt to] write") may have blocked her connection with students, though it is unclear whether she associated this revelation with her core qualities or if this association was more due

to how I highlighted the ways in which travel may suggest a different and more problematic connotation for her students.

As the above introduction suggests, this chapter explores the kinds of discourses Nicole turned to during uncertain teaching moments. I also discuss some of the factors that both empowered and challenged us to bring in Nicole's core qualities more fully. As part of this discussion, I outline some of the ways Nicole experienced core reflection and the ways it brought to light various discourses Nicole turned to during student teaching. Next, I bring Nicole's experiences into dialogue with some of the literature on teacher education. Finally, I conclude with the ways in which core reflection addressed uncertainty and some of Nicole's impressions of this process as a part of her journey in learning to teach.

About Nicole

Nicole Roberts established herself as a charismatic and confident presence from our first meeting until our last. Her personality suggested she would not have much trouble directing a classroom full of students. As someone many might characterize as an extrovert, Nicole spoke with ease about her life and her thoughts about teaching.

Nicole admitted she originally wanted to be a nurse, but found herself on academic probation after her first semester of college. She realized right away that she "hated the huge science focus, which [in retrospect] should have been a red flag when [she] decided to do nursing." After succeeding in an academic probation class and accepting a co-instructor role in a subsequent class the following academic year, Nicole "changed to education and loved it immediately."

That same academic year, Nicole accepted a position at Owl River High School teaching color guard. She noted that at age nineteen, coming "right after getting off academic probation," color guard helped her

> stay on track because I didn't have an abundance of time because teaching color guard isn't just a practice. It isn't like you just do all your job as a practice. You have to write work before you go to practice, you have to teach it, and you have to revise it when you get home.

In addition to color guard and working towards her elementary education degree, Nicole also sought a license addition in Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). Teaching ESL students, however, was not her first choice and she actually aspired to teach special education. Yet, she

> decided to do ESL because there wasn't a special ed concentration and I didn't want to just focus on special ed. But I'm getting special ed certified after I graduate. I love special ed. It sounds kind of mean and strange, but I think special ed kind of correlates kind of towards ESL cause you're teaching them English. And halfway through [college] I wanted to switch to [teaching] English, but there was no way I could do that, so I went with ESL.

As a requirement of seeking an ESL certification, Nicole's student teaching was split between two schools. The first ten weeks of her student teaching took place at Owl River Elementary and the remaining six weeks were spent working in an ESL classroom at Page Middle School.

Core Reflection with Nicole

The unequal split between the two student teaching contexts made it more challenging to fully address many of the problems and obstacles Nicole encountered during her ESL classroom

experience at Page Middle School. Since we spent six of our core reflection sessions addressing problem or inspirational situations she encountered at Owl River Elementary (two of which were inspirational and all of which involved working with individual students), the majority of this chapter focuses on that context. A problem situation at Page Middle School (the one that opened this chapter), seemed to be relevant to prior core reflection sessions and I reference this session on a few occasions as well. A final problem situation had to do with her ESL cooperating teacher (Teresa Pomither); however, I consider this situation unlike others Nicole encountered and thus wait until Chapter 8 to examine its implications.

Nicole shared many of the same successes and struggles with core reflection as Katie and Allison. On many occasions we surfaced discursive encounters and made discursive turns successfully (though, as I discuss later, I may have influenced these discursive turns a bit more than I would have preferred). Unlike Allison and Katie, the discourses Nicole turned to during uncertain moments seemed to work in concert to a greater degree than others in this study, and thus we spent more time working to uncover, interrogate, and counter these discourses. In this section, I discuss how that additional work manifested since this phenomenon seemed particularly relevant to the ways in which Nicole and I experienced core reflection.

Core reflection sessions with Nicole often went the full hour; even occasionally running five to ten minutes over that allotted time. When we met, Nicole often came in ready to speak at length about topics we reflected upon and, as a result, we occasionally devoted a portion of time discussing how we might avoid getting stuck too long at the "thinking" level of "the elevator" (see Chapter 4). For example, there were times when Nicole remained fixated on a prior step rather than addressing questions relevant to a current step. During those moments, I reminded

her to bring herself into contact with the step we were on currently. Nicole noticed this tendency in one of our IPR sessions and observed, "I'm off task a lot when I talk."

Unlike Katie, Allison, and Sarah (whom I'll discuss in Chapter 7), on occasion Nicole and I found it challenging to locate internal obstacles. During those sessions, we spent an unusually large portion of our sessions honing in on which internal obstacle was most relevant to the blocking of her core qualities. In keeping with core reflection procedure, I asked for her thoughts on the obstacles she brought up. Rather than addressing my question, she tended to instead bring up additional external obstacles and would talk about each in significant detail. For example, we encountered an internal obstacle where Nicole said she wanted the "immediate gratification" of students following classroom procedures. In other words, she did not want to have to tell students repeatedly to follow directions. I then asked her what she thought about this internal obstacle and she brought up several interrelated external obstacles such as "there is not enough time" to reinforce the procedure and how both she and Cindy agreed that it was not her fault that students will not follow procedures because they "lack maturity."

Initially, it was unclear to me what precipitated the extended reflection on obstacles. Instead of answering in a way that suggested she was making contact with the internal obstacle, Nicole would bring up more external obstacles. In response, I often asked Nicole which of these external obstacles most represented the essence of the problem and then began the elevator again by asking what she thought about the external obstacle. This recursive process (see Figure 6 below) would repeat several times before I concluded we had agreed upon an internal obstacle. By the time we decided upon an internal obstacle, I was not entirely sure whether she had truly made contact with the obstacle or if she had arbitrarily agreed upon one just to keep our session moving forward.

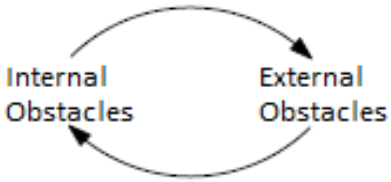

Figure 6: Recursive External Obstacle – Internal Obstacle Loop

In light of our occasional inability to make full contact with an internal obstacle, it seemed as though, in those moments, we reached the end of our core reflection sessions without fully addressing Nicole's interpretation of the internal obstacle. For example, in the excerpt that opened this chapter, Nicole and I agreed upon an internal obstacle of "there is nothing I can do to help improve student behavior," but when it came to the end of the session, Nicole still seemed to follow this obstacle rather than her core qualities, albeit, it seems, without full awareness. Ultimately, Nicole's realization regarding students' perception of travel was one that I was hoping she would arrive upon on her own, but in this case my influence might have been equal to that of core reflection. These sorts of instances gave me a feeling of "leading a horse to water but being unable to make it drink" because we could not quite make the discursive turn. To continue with the aforementioned example, Nicole spent the remaining twenty-five minutes of the session talking about how much she loved the writing prompt and how her students did not respond to it with the same enthusiasm. Yet, she did not seem to perceive and act upon this opportunity for a discursive turn.

Yet, IPR sessions suggested Nicole may have made a discursive turn sometime later, perhaps even weeks after the relevant session had concluded. During one particularly lengthy back and forth on an internal obstacle, Nicole had articulated how she felt she could not bring out her personable quality and have students learn math from her. When viewing this session weeks later during an IPR, Nicole and I discussed her reaction to this part of our core reflection session:

T - To sort of back up a little bit, in the video I said, “It sounds like you're saying that if you're personable they won't learn.” And then you laughed even now hearing that; you laughed in the video too [when I said that]. So what are you thinking when that was said?

N - That's ridiculous. They should be able to learn whether you're personable or not. I feel like if I'm more personable they will learn better. But with math, I don't feel like it comes out. I know they'll learn it, but I feel like if you're having fun you learn it better. But if I'm just being strict with them and going through the motions of what you're supposed to do, it's harder for them to learn it. So I think they'll learn if I'm personable.

This distinction represented a bit of a breakthrough for Nicole because we had spent at least twenty minutes in a core reflection session discussing how she felt she could not be personable and simultaneously teach math to her students. She seemed quite adamant regarding how she simply could not be personable during math, at least during our core reflection session together, but here she seemed to be able to differentiate between her innate ability to “be personable” versus letting this quality “come out more.” Perhaps Nicole was beginning to understand that her lack of “personability” during math was not a conclusive state, but was instead something she could work to ameliorate by letting that quality “come out” more. This suggests, for some participants, a “lag time” may exist, at least when it comes to making a discursive turn.

Discursive Findings

Though the previous section may have suggested otherwise, Nicole and I applied core reflection in a way that illuminated the kinds of discourses she turned to during moments of uncertainty. Similar to others in this study, we were usually able to move through all of the steps of core reflection and arrive upon core qualities Nicole could bring out to aid her and her

students. Seven core reflection sessions revealed beliefs that coalesced around an internally persuasive discourse and an authoritative discourse (an eighth session was excluded because it focused on Nicole's ESL cooperating teacher and thus was an outlier). The discourses "I Like the Way I Teach" and "We Just Need to Get Things Done" seemed to work in concert with one another. Though we also arrived upon an amplified internally persuasive discourse, "Seeing Them as People, Not Just as my Students," I will begin by discussing the internally persuasive discourse Nicole consulted during moments of uncertainty: "I Like the Way I Teach."

Internally Persuasive Discourse: "I Like the Way I Teach"

Nicole typically came into our sessions seeking to discuss one or a small group of her students. Sometimes she came in with inspirational moments in mind, but more often she arrived with a desire to discuss students who were presenting themselves as a challenge. Many of the internal obstacles Nicole expressed in the early stages of her student teaching coalesced around how "We Just Need to Get Things Done," yet this authoritative discourse was also in constant dialogue with "I Like the Way I Teach." Many of Nicole's problem situations seem to stem from a disjuncture between the ways she preferred to teach and the ways her students responded to this preference during moments of uncertainty. Nicole consulted the internally persuasive discourse of "I Like the Way I Teach" when confronted with her belief that she had one preferred way to teach, which suggested to me that this internally persuasive discourse was not only a response to being thrust into uncertain situations, but also a response to an authoritative discourse that suggested "We Just Need to Get Things Done."

The interplay between these two discourses became most apparent when we examined Nicole's personable quality and how this quality came out or did not come out during the times she taught math. This obstacle only came to our attention after Nicole discussed a student,

Renee, who was causing disruptions during math instruction. We decided that Nicole's personable quality was coming out during her ideal, but wondered what was keeping this quality from coming out more when she taught math to students such as Renee. After arriving upon an internal obstacle of "I can't be personable and teach math," I went on to ask Nicole what she thought of this obstacle:

> N - I think during certain times of the day it's a lot easier [to be personable]. During the morning and right after lunch, it's pretty easy. I think with math I just feel like it's so straightforward and it's something that they have to learn, that it's hard for me to be really personable with them. When I'm actually teaching them new topics, it's really hard during math for my personality to come out because I'm so focused on: we have to learn this, we're gonna test them on this; it's brand new, they don't know it.
>
> T - So is that what's happening when you're like, "I have to put aside my personable nature because I have to focus on them getting through this and learning it. I cannot bring my quality out because that will not let them learn it."
>
> N - Having you say it sounds ridiculous. *(Laughs.)* But I think that's how I feel. I know I have a certain amount of time and I have to get through and they have to know how to do it. And yeah, you can have fun with it and be funny up there, but at the end of the day, they have to know how to do this and if they don't then, you have to re-teach it again the next day.
>
> T - So it sounds like you have this belief that, "If I'm personable, they won't learn." Is that a good summary of it?
>
> N - I hope not! That's exactly what I said, you're right, but I just think that our time with math isn't as long as it should be and they don't stay quiet and I have to get through this.

And I just feel like I don't have.... I don't know, that sounds horrible, I don't think that. I can bring a personality out, but I can't be personable with them. I can have fun with it and be funny, but I can't....be fun. It's hard. I don't really know.

T - How do you feel about that? The idea that you can't be as personable?

N - I don't know. Cindy today was reviewing math with them and she was up there and having fun and they were into it. And she was knocking on the board to borrow numbers from the number next to her. It was really cute and it was a really quick review. And I was just looking at her and thinking, "I don't think I can do it like that." I just don't think it's me. Not that it can't ever be done. But for me with math, I'm very straight forward. My math is very straight forward. I think I'm very straight forward with it and I just want them to learn it. But we do cool things. Like we made a math foldable, which was fun. We did math board races, which was fun. I can make cool lessons that can go along with it. And fun lessons that go along with it. And teach those in an enthusiastic way, but I don't think it's in a way where I'm really getting personable with the students. I'm just teaching it and being excited about it.

T - So you're saying that those aren't personable ways to teach it. Those are more just humorous ways to teach something and keeps them engaged. But it's not in your mind the same thing as this personable thing.

N - I don't know what that is. I don't know what being personable would mean. I think personable, for me, would be getting on their level a lot more. And just being one-on-one with them or being able to walk around the room and do things with them. And I don't think with math I can do that. I think with math I need to teach it to them, make sure they got it. And then move on to the next math subject that we have to do.

Uncertain as to how to be personable while also teaching math, Nicole instead reiterated several times how “straightforward” she is with math and how she prefers to teach in this manner. Admitting, “I don’t know if I could ever teach it that way,” Nicole highlighted this uncertainty by comparing herself to her cooperating teacher.

The above exchange represents a time when Nicole and I seemed to be in contact with an internal obstacle of hers. That said, Nicole still petitioned to explore additional external obstacles such as how students are less alert in the afternoons (which is when math is taught) or how difficult it is to use the school mandated computer software to review math concepts with students. Faced with the uncertainty of how to navigate these obstacles, Nicole seemed to turn to an internally persuasive discourse as a way to remind her of how she liked to teach math in a more “straightforward way,” even though she suggested it thwarted her ability to be personable. I continued with the elevator to get a sense as to whether or not she still wanted these obstacles to her personable quality:

> T - So we are again to this point where we are talking about the fact that you cannot be personable and have them learn math. Because they'll miss something.
>
> N - Yes.
>
> T - That's the summary of the obstacle here.
>
> N - Probably. Yes.
>
> T - So is that what you want?
>
> N - I mean, I think. I think it's okay for math. Almost. And I'm okay with the fact that I'm like that and maybe as I teach more I will get better at. Maybe just breaking the math down and teaching it better. Or giving myself more time. So that everyone has time to get it. And we don't do a lot of differentiation with math. Just because we don't have

time. And the people who struggle with math are supposed to. Like we have people who struggle with math and they leave the classroom for math. But we still have people who really struggle and should probably leave the classroom, but don't. And those are the people every day who I'm working with on the previous lesson while the class is learning the next lesson. So I feel like I'm just playing catch up every day with math.

T - So maybe what we're saying is the obstacle is [actually] not an obstacle. Maybe you think that's just how you ought to teach. Do you think that obstacle of "I think I can't be personable with teaching math" is a matter of you not having enough content knowledge in math? Because you said maybe you'll teach it differently when you have more experience...

N - Maybe that's just hopeful or wishful thinking because I think I do well teaching math. I think math is one of the things I teach better than some of the other subjects, just because it's so straightforward. It's step by step. You have to do a certain thing to get a certain answer. And you can do it multiple ways. So I think I'm stronger teaching that than any other subject. It's just maybe eventually I'll learn to be personable while I'm teaching it? Maybe. Or maybe it's just not gonna happen for me. Maybe I need to put on my strict face when I teach math and teach it. Because I can be fun during language and we can play games during math, but when I'm teaching a new lesson and new material, I need to just be able to teach it. And not worry about being a bubbly personable person.

T - I know we keep talking about this, but I'm still not sure how you feel about this.

N - I don't really know. When I taught math in my math rotation, it was a game. Like it was just review. So this is the first time I'm really teaching new math to kids that is new

math to them. And it's the first time that I'm realizing that I'm like this with math. But I've always been very straightforward with math—that I need to understand it. That's it. There's not having fun with this. I need to get it done. And I think I'm like that with the kids as well. And I don't necessarily think it's a bad thing, but it might causing a disconnect with me and the students. So that part I'm not okay with. That part's a problem.

T - It sounds like the way you learned math is very "matter of fact," let's just get this done.

N - And I like that. I like just being, "That's how you do it. That's how you do it." You can write an essay a whole bunch of different ways, you can solve a math problem a few ways. You need to know how to do it. I'm totally okay with that part. So I just don't like that they're like, "Oh [no], it's math time." Which they might be like that [even] if I was the best teacher ever.

Despite her preference for teaching math in a straightforward manner, Nicole seemed to acknowledge that the "I Like the Way I Teach" discourse she turned to in moments of uncertainty often created a disconnect between her and her students. Additionally, Nicole's concerns about "playing catch up every day with math" may be indicative of how her "I Like the Way I Teach" discourse worked in concert with an authoritative discourse of "We Just Need to Get Things Done."

Other instances of Nicole turning to an internally persuasive discourse of "I Like the Way I Teach" found their way into our discussions on her teaching; the session that began this chapter is one example. In this session, Nicole was upset that her ESL students had "ruined" a lesson she was "so attached to." She had been looking forward to implementing this lesson "for months"

and was “excited about what was going to happen with them” when they did the lesson, but was frustrated by the fact that her students were either indifferent or resistant to it. Nicole was especially perplexed that travel, a topic she appreciated to a great degree, was not as resonant with her students:

> I don't know. I really have no idea [what is blocking the ideal]. And I thought that they would like this quote because it's so open. Like sometimes I feel like they feel very constricted about what they can write about. But they can write about anything in the entire world. I would have gone crazy with a writing prompt like this. So maybe I'm thinking too much about what I would like. Even when I think about sixth grade Nicole; sixth grade Nicole still wanted to go to other countries and so that's the first thing I thought, well maybe they didn't connect with the quote and they didn't want to write about it. But this is an open quote so I don't want to blame it on that.

Unsure as to what was blocking her lesson from unfolding successfully, Nicole began to wonder “if I’m thinking too much about what I would like.” As a result, she began to contemplate the rift between her teaching preferences and her students learning preferences. Yet, Nicole “didn’t want to blame the quote” and so she still largely placed the fault of the “ruined lesson” at the feet of her students because, presumably, they allowed themselves to “feel very constricted about what they write about” instead of being open-minded about the writing prompt.

Authoritative Discourse: “We Just Need to Get Things Done”

Nicole also turned to an authoritative discourse of “We Just Need to Get Things Done” during moments of uncertainty. In the aforementioned situation with her ESL students, she found them resistant to a writing prompt. Rather than discussing their resistance, Nicole carried on to her next activity, a collaborative storytelling activity related to Thanksgiving. Yet her

students also resisted this activity. Frustrated with her students' response, Nicole ended both activities early and instead had her students work on an independent writing activity for the remainder of the class period.

Uncertain about what went wrong with her ESL students, Nicole admitted she felt "internally, in terms of things I could change; I did not see a lot of things." With my prompting, she went on to provide more detail regarding exactly what her students were doing that "ruined" her lesson:

> They would just be like talking. Or saying, "Miss R, I don't want to do this. I don't want to do the writing today. I don't understand it. I don't want to travel. I don't have money to travel." I'm like, "Well, in this situation you have as much money as you can." [Then they said] "Well, I wouldn't use it on travel." And I'm like, "The quote is about travel. We're gonna write about travel."

Rather than spending time discussing with her students why they were struggling with the quote, Nicole encouraged them to push ahead by reiterating how they were to get the prompt done by writing about travel. In the interest of "getting things done," she pressed forward, seeming to ignore the disconnect between her students and the writing prompt.

As we compared the problem situation to her ideal, I sensed that we were approaching a discursive turn. In the hopes of helping her to see how her personable quality might apply to this situation, I went on to ask her how she might apply her core quality of being personable to this situation:

> T - You have this quote and you're ready to connect, but they're not there connecting to what it is you have up there. So the question is: "How can I use this [personable] quality to find a way to connect to them?" Because you're trying, but it just did not work. What

is it that you can do with your qualities to maintain your rapport, to maintain your connection, maintain your personable nature? What can you do to make sure those qualities still come out? So they didn't connect with the quote, now what?

N – Well, maybe I could have just dropped the quote, but I don't want them to start thinking, "If I just jack around and not do the quote that we're just gonna drop it every day." Because doing the writing every day was something that Teresa wanted me to continue to do and I like doing it. So do I just have a second quote just in case they don't connect with it every day? I mean I feel at some point you just need to write about it, get it over with so we can move on.

Nicole considered differentiating her instruction by providing different options (e.g., "dropping the quote" or "providing a second quote"), but instead she seemed to return to a discourse that suggested that changing the curriculum would enable off-task behavior rather than assist students with completing their work. Unsure what to do in the face of student resistance, Nicole decided that altering her approach would be counterproductive to her goal of "getting things done so we can move on."

Nicole also consulted this discourse often during her elementary student teaching experience. Speaking of an inspirational one-on-one moment with a student, Juliet, I asked her what kept her from having more inspirational moments and Nicole replied "a lot of kids who really need one-on-ones don't have work done. Sometimes we can have one-on-ones when everyone is quiet, but most of the time we are 'go-go-go.'" She also spoke of special education students, such as Leah and Joseph, who would benefit from more one-on-one work, but who were not "ready for it" because they still had not proved themselves capable of getting enough done during one-on-one work:

> Leah, who is super shy and is probably on track for being tested for special ed in math…if we took people like that out then they would be behind or we'd get it done but I might be helping them too much…I'd love to hear more about Leah or Joseph – kids who aren't doing so well, but if I pulled them out…Juliet was able to talk and get work done and she's very mature for her age. Joseph would talk about his stuff for days and then not get anything done and it would be really hard to keep focused.

Certainly Nicole's reasoning is understandable, though it does seem to echo a similar "we just need to get things done" discourse because students can only learn from "pull-outs" if they have matured to the point where they can stay focused on the task set before them by the teacher, rather than talking about "their stuff."

Nicole's experience with one student, Eric, was particularly relevant to this discourse. Eric was a student who seldom did his homework and would have his recess revoked as punishment. Though he seldom got upset when Nicole told him he was losing recess, he often immediately burst into tears the moment his peers were dismissed for recess. Following this outburst, Eric usually spent the remainder of the day crying, disrupting class, and generally being unproductive. Neither Nicole nor her cooperating teacher, Cindy, knew what to do about Eric not doing his homework, nor were they sure how to handle the way he responded to losing recess:

> I get that it upsets him when he doesn't get to go out [for recess], but what are we supposed to do? Like everyone else, if you don't turn in your homework, if you don't have your homework done, you have to stay in for recess. For the whole recess. Even if you get it done in the first five minutes [of recess]. Because then we have people rushing to get it done really quick so they can. I completely agree with that, but then Eric, if he

gets his homework done before recess [ends], he can go. And he ends up getting a bad grade for it. Because he rushes through it. And the only reason Cindy lets him do that is because she knows it will at least make him finish the day off in a good mood. So neither of us know what else to do.

Here Nicole recognized the uncertainty surrounding Eric's situation, but questioned the way Cindy bent her homework policy for Eric. While Nicole acknowledged this differentiated approach resulted in Eric finishing the day off in a "good mood," she wondered whether or not he was really learning anything from his homework since he "rushes through it."

Sensing an internal obstacle contributing to Eric's pattern of outburst, I attempted to make this obstacle more apparent to Nicole:

N – Ninety-nine percent of the time [he has an outburst], it's when recess gets taken away. It's either we're telling him that recess has gotten taken away or we're taking something away. Which there is a correlation there, but there's nothing we can do. We can't have him being able to go out to recess when he's got like ten zeroes in the gradebook.

T - I hear at least one limiting situation where you're kind of "I don't think we can not take away recess" because of all the zeroes he has. And so, that's just a belief that you have or/

N - /that's Cindy's.

T - It's her policy so you can't really go outside of it.

N - No. And even if it wasn't her policy, I would feel bad about changing it just because we differentiate so much in like how much work he has to do. Like on Thursday when he was having such a bad day, we at least wanted him to get something done so that we

could put something in the gradebook. So we only made him do the front side of his vocab exercise and we only made him do half of his math. And that's okay. I mean the vocab wasn't a bad thing because you're doing the same thing on both sides, you're just doing it with different words. But the math I felt like it might have been not a good idea because, unless he does the math, he does not do well on the tests. And she only made him do the re-teaching side and not the practice side. But I think Eric *needs* practice in that and is not getting it... And then today he took a pre-test and got a seventy-five. We were supposed to take an actual test today. But we didn't feel like the students were ready, so we just took a pretest instead. And he didn't do well. And I think it's from not making him do, like making him only do the odds or maybe only the evens. So he's still getting the information because I don't think he's getting enough repetition.

Nicole's response to me pointing out her internal obstacle seemed to be a "doubling down" on an authoritative discourse that suggested Eric simply was "not getting enough" done. She mentioned that she and Cindy already differentiated so much and she "feels bad" because this differentiation seems to be reducing his ability to "get enough" done rather than assisting with it.

Another facet to the "We Just Need to Get Things Done" discourse was a worry of what teachers in subsequent grades would think of Nicole's teaching. She specifically mentioned this worry in our discussion on why she felt she had to teach math in a "straightforward manner":

I feel like math is something that's harped on so much that if they don't know it and they go to fifth grade and it's: "Who was your fourth grade teacher?" And they don't know how to multiply two digit by two digit numbers and they can't and we're doing it with them right now: "What was your third grade teacher doing where you don't know your two facts and your five facts?" So now we're having to backtrack because their third

> grade teacher didn't teach their facts correctly or enough. So I think I'm just pressured. Especially with student teaching, maybe, that I need to teach them correctly and they need to all learn it and do well.

Unlike many of the participants in this study, Nicole's authoritative discourse seemed informed less by her cooperating teacher and more by the potential of disapproving fifth grade teachers. In this way, the "We Just Need to Get Things Done" discourse Nicole turned to in moments of uncertainty seemed more informed by an "institution as authority" than it did by "the social status of [an authoritative] speaker" (Sullivan et al., 2009, p. 330).

Discursive Amplification: "Seeing Them as People, Not Just Students"

Nicole turned to two discourses during uncertain moments encountered in student teaching. These discourses were "We Just Need to Get Things Done" and "I Like the Way I Teach." In response to these discourses, Nicole began to develop and turn to a discourse that spoke to seeing her students as people with learning needs distinct from the ones her internally persuasive and authoritative discourses might suggest. Rather than seeing her class as passive participants to be taught according to her preferred instructional design, Nicole began to consider ways to have them "bring their own stuff" into the class. In this way, it seemed she began to consider a discourse that asked her to "See Them as People, Not Just Students" during uncertain teaching moments. Instead of operating as a counter-discourse, this discourse was instead an amplification of her "I Like the Way I Teach" internally persuasive discourse. It was informed, in part, by the ways Nicole drew upon her core qualities of flexibility and being personable.

To illustrate this discursive amplification, I return to Nicole's struggle to bring her personable quality out in her math instruction, specifically with one of her students, Renee. After spending several minutes circling the external-internal obstacle loop (see Figure 6 above),

we began to shift our discussion towards concretely bringing this quality out in her interactions with Renee:

N - So maybe if I would have sat right next to [Renee], she would have gotten it done and gotten it done better. Or at least she's got it done in a better manner.

T - So let's revisit the ideal and incorporate this part of it, if that's something you want to do.

N - Yeah.

T - So talk about that. What happens?

N - So she would have goofed off once and been talking to her group and I would have sent her back to the table while it was quieter. And then, I think as it got louder, I think she would have probably gotten more off task. So as I saw her get more off task I would have stepped back there with her immediately and been like, "Okay, let's see how much you have done. And let's just go question by question and I'll ask you." And then we can go through it like that. And then get it done and move on. Done. *(Laughs.)*

T - So there I can see the personable part, right?

N – Yes. *(Laughs.)*

T - You're literally sitting next to her and like, "Okay, this one here." It's one of those things where you're working with her in a personal nature. Are you being super fun? No. But it's personable. That's what personable means to me—it's person to person. It's not sort of this disconnect like we were talking before. Perhaps it's possible to be personable up there [at the front of the room], but we don't know yet. So we'll just put that off to the side for now. Because in this ideal, I see the personable part coming out a lot more.

N - Agreed.

T - So what do you think about this new modified ideal?

N - This is better. I'm feeling calm. *(Laughs.)*

T - Good.

N - I think she, if not get a better grade on her test, she might have felt better about the situation. Because it's never fun to get your name called fifty times. I don't think it really bothers her. She doesn't show that it bothers her. But it might have been better on her to have her just come back there immediately. And I think that's why she would have done better if I would have just taken her back there immediately.

T - So here you're feeling calmer, whereas before you were like, "I can't be personable. I gotta be real serious. I gotta take control." And then pretty soon it starts to transform into this problem scenario where she's just getting worse and you're getting angrier and it's just not good for anybody.

N - Yes.

T - So can you see the qualities now?

N - Yes. I can see calm and personable.

In the above, Nicole began to expand beyond "We Need to Get Things Done" by arguing that working with Renee in a more personal one-on-one manner will assist her in more ways than just "getting it done." She acknowledged that, whether it improves Renee's test score or not, Nicole's personable quality will help keep both her and Renee feeling calmer and this, in and of itself, is a worthy reason to modify her approach. In this case, Nicole began to perceive the merits, beyond mere test scores and "getting it done," of relating to Renee on a more personal level.

Later in her student teaching, Nicole also began to recognize how the personal aspect of her teaching brought benefits to her ESL students. Following the excerpt that began this chapter, Nicole created an ideal that incorporated a writing prompt with which both her and her students might relate:

> I think next time I'll try to find a quote that's more relevant to them. That they know the author. Or know the person who said the quote. And it's something we can talk about. Like Walt Disney's quote made sense for Walt Disney. So maybe thinking more about things like that. And just making the quote more relevant to their everyday lives—it will be something they can easily connect to. That they don't have to think about if they had the time or if they had the money. It is something they can immediately think about. And the author is someone they are familiar with that they can connect to and maybe draw off of him or her more and get a discussion going with that as well.

Rather than focusing solely on a writing prompt that she liked and then "getting this done," Nicole entertained the idea of using quotes that are more relevant to their "everyday lives" that they can "easily connect to" to "get a discussion going." Rather than narrowly focusing on whether students "ruined" a lesson she was "really attached to," Nicole began to use her personable quality to expand her vision from blaming her students for not "getting it done" towards one that allowed her the agency to construct a lesson more "relevant" to students' "everyday lives."

Nicole also began to apply this same approach to Eric. Rather than becoming narrowly focused on the discourse of whether differentiation was helping or hindering his learning process, she began to use her personable quality to view Eric as a person with larger concerns than just those of a student:

> I just got to learn about Eric the person instead of Eric the student and I think by being really personable with him it really helped him trust and just listen to what we needed him to do and cooperate better and I went back [after my Owl Creek student teaching ended] and he seemed to be doing great. Just getting to know him and getting to know his parents was really eye opening.

By putting her personable quality ahead of her worries on whether he was "getting enough" done, Nicole earned Eric's trust which, in part, led to Eric "doing great." In light of Eric's previous history of constant outbursts and episodes of crying, I sense this change was a significant turn of events for Eric.

During our final interview, Nicole singled out Eric when I asked her about the ways she turned to core qualities throughout her student teaching. In addition to drawing upon her personable quality, she also cited flexibility as being important in her work with Eric:

> I think about my characteristics a lot when I'm teaching. Especially when I'm with Eric. So thinking about being kind and being flexible. I think about being flexible *a lot* with Eric. I literally tell myself, just be flexible, he'll do it one way or the other. And just knowing, especially with him, it's always going to have to be differentiated. And I'm really good at that and so pulling that strength in when dealing with him. I think I thought about that a lot. And just getting on his level and making sure he understands that I'm there for him and that if he needs anything that I'm right there. But also being firm with him and making sure that he knows that he has to get his work done just like everyone else. Because I feel like sometimes I'm a little lenient with him, which I think is okay at times, but I still need to be fair to the other students and he needs to be doing his work and not playing on his computer when he should be taking a math test. So I think I think

about all the characteristics we talk about when we're working with, specifically with Eric, but just being fun and making learning fun.

During uncertain moments, Nicole reminded herself: "Just be flexible; he'll do it one way or another." As an aside, this example demonstrates how Nicole constructed her amplified internally persuasive discourse through the use of her own vocabulary. She took this adapting approach throughout to describe her experiences of core reflection. She referred to her "characteristics" (i.e., core qualities) as "getting down on his level" and "being fun" (being personable) while also "being firm" (being authoritative). More so than Katie or Allison, Nicole amplified her internally persuasive discourse on her own terms by using her own vocabulary to describe her "characteristics" rather than terminology I had introduced in our core reflection sessions.

Core Reflection and the Phenomenon of Learning to Teach

Core reflection with Nicole revealed two discourses that Nicole consulted during uncertain teaching moments: "We Just Need to Get Things Done" and "I Like the Way I Teach." Nicole's qualities of being personable and flexible, in part, assisted her in molding her "I Like the Way I Teach" into a more expansive discourse that asked her to "See Them as People, Not Just Students." With these discourses in mind, this section looks at some of the lessons Nicole learned through these discursive encounters and how these lessons may be expanded upon based on what we know about teacher education, specifically Nicole's experience of occupational socialization and evaluation.

Socialization

Nicole's experience with teaching high school color guard and academic probation class may have socialized her to teaching earlier than Allison and Katie and, thus, she seemed to experience her discourses of "We Just Need to Get Things Done" and "I Like the Way I Teach"

as more rooted in "experience" and perhaps more resistant to change than others in this study. Nicole often already had several experiences and strategies in mind for each situation we discussed and this difference represented an additional layer to unravel during our sessions. Unlike Allison, Katie, and Sarah, Nicole's memories of teaching color guard and her academic probation class gave her a lived teaching experience to reinforce discourses that called on her to "Get Things Done" and reminded her of ways she "Liked Teaching."

In an interview following her student teaching experience at Owl River, Nicole cited the influence of color guard as one which informed her view of what an "orderly" classroom is. She pointed out, however, that teaching at Owl River had made a huge difference in the ways she taught, not only in the elementary classroom, but also in color guard. She commented how she used to be "so strict" in color guard before student teaching, but found herself becoming more flexible (and calmer) as she gained more experience working with Cindy, her cooperating teacher at Owl River:

> I am very neat and organized and my class would reflect this, but [the Owl River] classroom was not. Not in a bad way. So that brought a new perspective to how a classroom could be like…I have a need for them to be quiet and doing their work and all of those things. But with Cindy being there and not really caring as much about that, it was easier for the other [flexible] side to come out but there were still times I had to fight back and say, "Be quiet." [Students] probably weren't at a very loud level, they probably were still working well, but I didn't know that's what they were doing. So it was easier if Cindy was in the room because if she wasn't yelling at them then I shouldn't be telling them to. So I would always look to her and see if she looked perturbed and if she didn't

then I wouldn't say anything. So that helped me find my levels and figure out when I need to say something and when not to.

Here Nicole recognized the influence of her biography, her cooperating teacher, and her core quality of flexibility. She then looked to Cindy during moments of uncertainty to help her "find [her] levels" with regards to balancing these influences. Nicole's more natural authoritative presence compelled her to ask students to "be quiet," though Cindy modeled how to bring forth a more flexible quality that suggested that some level of "disorder" was "okay" as long as students were "still working."

This example echoes the arguments of scholars who have suggested how autobiography influences teacher learning, particularly how the life history of pre-service teachers may inform their perceptions of the "norms" of schooling (Danielewicz, 2001; Richardson, 1996; Sleeter, 2008; Zeichner, 1981). Additionally, it appears as though Nicole's autobiographical experiences, in this case her experience in color guard, was a foundation from which she built her student teacher identity (Danielewicz, 2001; Graue, 2005). In this case, Nicole considered how a "flexible" teacher identity may coexist with autobiographical experiences that suggest more authoritative identities are the "normal" stance for "getting things done."

Nicole's cooperating teacher, Cindy Campbell, played a significant role in encouraging flexibility in the classroom. Coming into this study, I expected cooperating teachers, and the authoritative discourses they often represent and reinforce, to mostly make their presence felt as obstacles to the manifestation of student teacher core qualities. Certainly the cases of Katie and Allison reinforced this assumption. Nicole's cooperating teacher, however, used her position to encourage and reinforce a balanced approach towards Nicole's core qualities. From the first moment I met Nicole, I sensed a core quality of authority and I felt as though she would not have

much trouble "taking control" of a class of fourth graders. What I (and perhaps Nicole) did not fully anticipate was her difficulty with students who did not immediately respond to her authority quality. Our core reflection sessions led us to consider ways for Nicole to be more personable and flexible with these students during uncertain teaching moments, but I also want to acknowledge Cindy's effect on the ways Nicole expressed her qualities in the classroom. My conversations with Nicole suggested the role of the cooperating teacher in aiding and encouraging the use of core qualities in the classroom is not to be overlooked.

Evaluation

Katie and Allison's experiences of learning to teach and being evaluated seemed to revolve around authoritative discourses, usually taking the form of real or imagined critical feedback from their cooperating teachers. Yet, Nicole's relationship with Cindy and her university supervisor seemed to be experienced without any sense of pressure to conform to an authoritative discourse. Nicole seemed to experience evaluation as a pressure to bring her students up to a certain academic level for those teachers who would be inheriting her students in subsequent grades. As a result, Nicole seemed to turn to a discourse in uncertain moments that questioned whether she had sufficiently met a standard of "getting things done."

Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of this discourse was Nicole's desire to teach math in a straightforward manner because "it's something that they just have to learn." For example, in one core reflection session, Nicole pushed back against the notion of bringing her personable quality out more in her math instruction because it seemed as though it would be a detour from a more linear or "straightforward" approach to teaching. Instead of bringing in her "personality," Nicole saw her role primarily as being more bureaucratic—her goal was to prepare her students for mathematics instruction in subsequent grades. Such an approach seemed to

almost present math instruction as a linear policy to implement and enforce rather than as a means to help students learn.

Nicole commented on how much she appreciated taking a "straightforward" approach when she learned math growing up and she assumed her students would hold a similar learning preference. Many students, such as Juliet, seemed to work fine and even thrive under this assumption, but other students, such as Renee and Eric, could not keep up with this "straightforward" approach. A "straightforward" stance may seem natural for subjects such as mathematics, particularly for young teachers who may have grown up during the No Child Left Behind era of educational policy, but, as Delandshare and Arens (2001) noted through citing Ball, "policy is intended and enacted; while policies are simple, practice is 'sophisticated, contingent, complex, and unstable'" (p. 563). Nicole certainly seemed surprised when her "policy" approach to math created a disconnect with her students and this was likely because instruction, math included, is more complex than simply filling the heads of passive learners.

I argue Nicole's internally authoritative discourse of "We Just Need to Get Things Done" contributed to this disconnect, particularly between Nicole and students such as Eric and Renee. This discourse echoes a common "lay theory" student teachers hold regarding what constitutes good teaching. Sugrue (1997) described this lay theory as:

> Good teachers get work done. They are task oriented and set moderate or significant amounts of homework. Higher achieving pupils are more likely to thrive in such circumstances and endear themselves to their teachers. Both teachers' and pupils' behaviors therefore tend to mirror each other in mutually reinforcing ways. Perhaps the price which more able pupils pay for such an apparently comfortable arrangement is a degree of conformity which does not encourage or tolerate challenging questions or

> taking significant initiatives which would allow for individual flair or particular interest. (p. 219)

Sugrue's point regarding "individual flair" or "particular interest" being repressed seems apt in this case. Eric and Renee brought particular interests and individual flair to the classroom and these qualities could have been called upon more in the classroom, in math and in other academic areas. Nicole began to recognize this fact as she turned to a modified internally persuasive discourse that asked her to "See Them as People, Not Just Students." Through the lens of this discourse, Nicole began to understand Eric (and perhaps Renee) better and began to see a change in how he behaved in the classroom.

Addressing Uncertainty with Core Reflection

Even though Nicole's reticence to make contact with an internal obstacle proved more challenging than I expected, I sensed we still arrived at a discourse, "Seeing Them as People, Not Just Students," that benefited not only Nicole, but also her students at Owl River. This section looks at the process of arriving at this discourse while also considering some of the challenges inherent in doing so. I also consider Nicole's shift from Owl River Elementary to Page Middle School and how the discourses of one context may or may not have transferred from one school to another. Finally, I turn my attention towards some of the ways my position as teacher educator influenced the ways we reflected upon Nicole's beliefs and the discourses that informed them.

More so than other participants in this study, Nicole's internally persuasive and authoritative discourses seemed to work in concert with one another quite often. The ways in which these discourses complemented each other made the interrogation of one discourse contingent upon the interrogation of its counterpart. This fusion occasionally made for a more

challenging core reflection session as Nicole would bring up external obstacles associated with one discourse and, rather than interrogating this discourse more deeply, would switch to discuss external obstacles of another discourse.

Figure 7 below attempts to illustrate this process. The top of the figure represents one entry point to what I will call a Discursive Obstacle Loop. After Nicole articulated an external obstacle associated with an internally persuasive discourse (e.g., "I Like the Way I Teach"), I would next ask for Nicole's thoughts on the external obstacles associated with this same internally persuasive discourse. Rather than discussing internal obstacles, Nicole articulated external obstacles associated with an authoritative discourse (e.g., "We Just Have to Get Things Done"). Asking about internal obstacles associated with the same authoritative discourse would elicit more external obstacles from an internally persuasive discourse, which brought us back to the top of the below figure. In summary, Nicole's answer to the first question of obstacles may have been either an external obstacle related to either authoritative or internally persuasive discourses. Nicole would then switch to discussing obstacles associated with the discursive counterpart (i.e., switching from internally persuasive to authoritative or vice versa) when I asked her what she thought and felt about these external obstacles.

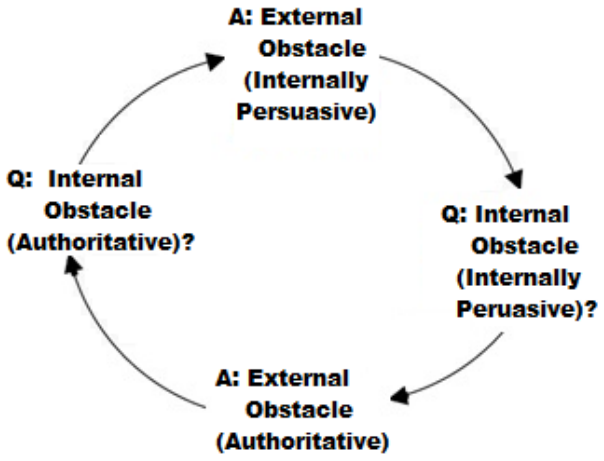

Figure 7: Discursive Obstacle Loop

I interpret the above phenomenon as indicative of fused discourses. In Nicole's case it seemed as though her internally persuasive discourse "I Like the Way I Teach" complemented "We Just Need to Get Things Done" to an unexpected degree. Unlike other participants, Nicole's internally persuasive discourse seemed not to resist her authoritative discourse, but instead worked in concert with it. For this reason, I wonder if Nicole's internally persuasive discourse was not in response to "We Just Need to Get Things Done," but was instead a response to a different, unidentified authoritative discourse.

Despite the challenges inherent in addressing two complementary discourses, we were able to arrive upon an amplified version of Nicole's internally persuasive discourse. This amplified discourse was "Seeing Them as People, Not Just Students." That said, I wonder how much this discourse fully extended to her ESL student teaching. Nicole observed Page Middle as a "completely different" context and, as a result, two sessions during her ESL student teaching may have been insufficient to help her make these connections. These sessions revealed Nicole had not fully made the connection between what she learned from Owl River and how this may apply to Page Middle School and perhaps additional core reflection sessions may have helped her broaden the application of the ways in which she might see her students "as people" rather than "just students."

Prior to student teaching, I foresaw issues in Nicole's ESL placement. During our first interview, Nicole admitted her first choice was to teach special education students, but switched to ESL because "special ed kind of correlates kind of towards ESL 'cause you're teaching them English." I felt that comparison, in my estimation, was not fair to special education students or students learning English as a second language, but I did not feel it was the time or place to comment. I anticipated us addressing this misunderstanding of ESL students during the core

reflection sessions that overlapped with her experience at Page Middle. I was also mindful of some of the past internal obstacles she had articulated with regards to nonconformist students.

In light of this history and Nicole's proclivity for teaching in ways she preferred, I was not surprised when Nicole came to our sessions unsure what to do about ESL student resistance. Sensing prior internal obstacles, I immediately had a few hypotheses of what Nicole's internal obstacle might be, but wanted to allow her the space to unearth these for herself. I also carried with me values oriented around social justice and was sensitive to the ways students, especially those who are English Language Learners, can be marginalized by deficit discourses (see James, 2012) and assimilative practices (see Ladson-Billings, 1994). These values made it more challenging to remain silent when Nicole seemed unable to draw a connection between her actions and her students' resistance.

Still, I did my best to keep my values to myself because a participant's ideal should come from a participant's core qualities. Yet, as the excerpt that opens this chapter shows, after discussing her writing prompt for at least twenty minutes, it seemed as though, in my estimation, that Nicole was not going to make full contact or interrogate her internal obstacles enough to break through to a true interrogation of the discourses she was consulting during her instruction. As the session drew to a close, I gave her a gentle nudge towards my own ideal by commenting: "Well, if everything is the same except the quote."

To summarize, Nicole did not seem to experience as much of an interrogation of the discourses informing her interactions with ESL students as I would have hoped. A lack of guidance from her cooperating teacher, Teresa Pomither, put me in a particularly difficult position because I felt the temptation to speak on behalf of her students since her cooperating teacher did not seem to be inclined to provide this kind of mentorship to Nicole (at least as

Nicole told it). By the end, Nicole had not completely "connected-the-dots" and, as a result, I found myself unable to remain completely neutral. This stance may have temporarily reflected my own ideal more than Nicole's, but I decided to intervene more than I would have otherwise, if only to influence the ways she was perceiving her ESL students.

Summary

As this chapter illustrated, core reflection does not occur in a vacuum. The experiences of a coach and the ways these experiences influence core reflection may play a role in the ways it may be used to address uncertainty. Though in this case the ends may have justified the means with Nicole's approach to ESL students, a coach has to be sensitive to the possibility of imposing an ideal upon a participant. The lessons learned from core reflection may only be sustained insofar as a participant recognizes them as coming from her inner core (see Onion model in Chapter 1). That said, Nicole adopted her own terminology in describing her "characteristics" and so I surmise much of what we talked about in core reflection originated with Nicole.

Nicole seemed to particularly appreciate the times we were able to discuss concrete problems and arrive at concrete ways to use her core qualities in the classroom. In our final interview, Nicole outlined some of the ways core reflection impacted how she thought of her practice:

> I think when I started to understand the process better, when I could start seeing what qualities I was doing without you having to tell me, when I finally was able to start seeing where my qualities were coming out in the classroom. That was really helpful cause it helped me use them in the classroom even more. It helped me find areas where I knew they could come out and use that more. I think just an overall thought: I'll be a lot better at breaking down what I did in a lesson for the next lesson now. If an issue comes up, I'll

> be able to process it a lot differently than I normally do. Normally I just wouldn't think about how it would affect the next lesson. Now I can think about an ideal situation and what lead me astray from getting to that.

Nicole specifically highlighted how important it was that she was able to name and identify her core qualities "without you having tell me." This reiterated my sense that I had regarding Nicole's desire to conduct core reflection on her terms. Sometimes I may have pointed out internal obstacles that she did not immediately identify as her own or I may have moved us towards an ideal she was not read to fully employ, but I sensed through all of that Nicole gave deep consideration to how she could take what we learned in core reflection, make it hers, and employ these essential lessons in her future lessons and interactions with students.

Chapter 7: Sarah

Tom - Let's say it's tomorrow or whenever it's the next time that you encounter Colton. So you walk in and you are doing what you normally do. What's the first thing that you're doing in this scenario?

Sarah - I guess I'm going around doing my responsibilities, but also keeping an eye on him—knowing that I'm going to be monitoring his section soon. Just kind of being aware of him and his surroundings so that I know what I'm going to walk into. And then taking it from there.

T - So imagine it's basically a repeat of today. He's not feeling it. But this time you've noticed how people have critiqued him. And you're going into his area and you're going to have to say something to him. What happens then?

S - I think if he makes this same mistake I think I would say, "Okay, so there's a corner happening. Can you guys be a guide to your neighbors and make sure you're in a nice curve? And think about that next round? Don't make it a corner. Make a nice curve." Or maybe, if that didn't work, maybe the next time say, "Hey, okay seniors, can you really watch the people around you and give one critique to an underclassman on your own next time?" So then just taking the pressure off of me. Peer critique is so much less scary and so much less disheartening. And if I do have to approach him specifically, I think definitely sandwiching where I say, "Hey, it's getting so much better. I can tell you're really trying, so I appreciate that so much. Could you please...do this?" I don't know.

T - You're kind of starting to lose your presence already.

S - I know.

T - You seemed so present in every part of the strategy. And then...

S - Yeah, yeah.

T - So what's happening there?

S - I guess I'm still having this...I don't want to call him out. I really don't. Because I'm really trying to avoid that. And if it's a necessary case, then I'm just gonna have to.

T - So it sounds like you have lots of knowledge in terms of, “First, I'll do this. Second, I'll do this.” But at some point it might escalate to the point where you're just going to have to engage with Colton one-on-one. So think about how your qualities are going to inform that one-on-one interaction. You'll have to adjust him somehow. Still using your presence. Still using your empathy.

S - Maybe coming up and positioning myself within the group and just saying, “Hey can you guys do this with me while we're standing together?” And then kind of walking through, with me kind of being Colton. Not replacing, but being next to him. So kind of modeling it. If that still doesn't work, maybe just coming up next to him, just saying in a lower voice, “Can you take smaller steps this time? I don't know if it would work, but maybe it would. Let's trial and error.” Coming in, I didn't think there was any other way to approach it, but now just approaching it in eighty different directions and see if you get a bite on anything.

T - Let's say that your tool bag is completely empty now. And then you're just like, “Colton, we need you to do this.” And he is still unresponsive and not listening to you. What happens then?

S - At this point I would just think I couldn't take it to heart and I don't think I would anymore. But I would just say something like, “Colton, it's going really well. Try to take

smaller steps for me." And just leave it like that. Nice and simple. And see if that helps. And if it still doesn't, "I noticed you adjusted some things, just a little bit more." And I'm not afraid to say those types of things and obviously it's just repetition. Kind of reinforcing it. I'm not going away. If he's not giving me the benefit of the doubt then just keep doing my job and doing the most that I possibly could. But not letting his attempt at not giving me my way to affect my presence.

T - I feel like your presence was there with you the whole time. You didn't lose it just because he wasn't acknowledging you. So looking at this whole ideal play out and there are many parts to it, many different directions it could go - how do you feel about it?

S - I feel pretty confident. I feel more confident coming in here. I'm feeling optimistic because I feel like I have more tools, so I don't feel like I'm at the end of my rope anymore. I don't feel like I have to go, "Oh crap, he's not going to look at me? What am I going to do?" I'm not panicking. I'm like, "Well, I'll try this. We'll see how this works. And if it still doesn't work, then I have to keep trying because I can't stop."

In the above role-play, Sarah considered the choices available to her and instead of following limiting beliefs with regards to "calling out Colton," she chose to stay in contact with her qualities of presence, empathy, and determination. Initially she felt herself begin to become fixated on what might happen if she "called out" Colton and subsequently "panicked," turned away from her quality of presence, and ended up struggling to draw upon all of the knowledge she had at her disposal. After taking a step back from this panicked response, she reconnected with her quality of presence (in addition to other qualities such as empathy and determination) to guide her towards a more expansive approach of engaging Colton.

Similar to others in this study, Sarah's internal obstacles and core qualities seem to partly draw strength from discursive sources. These discourses suggested to Sarah what she ought to do in certain instances. Fortunately, Sarah's ability to stay in contact with each step of core reflection provided a pretty clear look at these beliefs, the discourses that informed them, and the possible counter-discourses available to her during moments of uncertainty.

As I did in the previous three chapters, I discuss some of the ways Sarah experienced core reflection and the ways it brought to light the various discourses and counter-discourses Sarah encountered and turned to during student teaching. Following a discussion of these findings, I bring Sarah's experiences with core reflection into dialogue with some of the literature on teacher education. Finally, I conclude with some of the ways core reflection addressed uncertainty along with Sarah's impressions of core reflection as a part of her journey in learning to teach.

About Sarah

Since an early age, Sarah Stahler has been involved in music in one form or another. She started playing piano at age four and began saxophone (which became her primary instrument) in fourth grade. As a result of her accomplishments in school and band, she distinguished herself from her peers and by the time she was in high school she was invited to perform in a "musical ambassadors" program, which consisted of music students from around the state. This program allowed her to perform in several different countries in Europe. Sarah described this experience as one of the highlights of her life because "it was great to get around people with a shared passion for music because it was rare to find people like that" in high school. Following high school, she went to Stephens Music School to prepare for her student teaching, but, in contrast to Allison, Sarah's specialization was in concert band rather than choral performance.

A week prior to her student teaching, Sarah and I met in late July to conduct our first interview. Despite her youthful appearance, she presented herself as articulate, poised, and professional. It was not difficult to imagine her being a school administrator in ten to fifteen years. When I asked Sarah what it was about education that interested her, her reply was succinct and thoughtful, qualities I came to expect from her as we became acquainted:

> Getting an education degree is so well rounded. It really hits everything. It was the best fit. I chose the education route because I'm not one of those people who can sit in practice room eight hours a day and be satisfied with it. I definitely wanted to do more than that and I wanted to do more with other people rather than going for a career just on my own. And I babysat when I was younger and I worked a lot with kids. Ever since I was a sophomore in high school, for summer camps and swimming lessons, and I just loved working with the kids and so I knew education was the direction that I would find the most fulfilling and I do—I've been student teaching for a week and I just absolutely adore the kids already and it's been a really good fit so far.

As Sarah alluded to above, she had already begun working with marching band in the weeks prior to student teaching. She described her student teaching placement, a mid-sized high school in a university town, as "exciting" because it was home to one of the top bands in the state.

Though Sarah often seemed to say "all the right things" to my questions, she also seemed to be open about her feelings about student teaching. She readily admitted she was "apprehensive" about marching band because it was a "totally different culture" and "the kids have way more knowledge on it than I do." She went on to say she felt it was going to be challenging to be in a "position of authority" over them when she "didn't know as much." Sarah also expressed a general concern of "having students want to be there and be motivated to make

themselves to be better instead of having students whose parents want them to take the class because it looks good for college because that's how it was at my high school." But then Sarah went on to say that "even the things that I'm apprehensive about, I'm excited to get better at those to sort of reduce that 'deer in the headlights' feeling that I'm gonna have in my first year of teaching. I'm the most excited to meet the kids and get to know them and have a connection with them."

Core Reflection with Sarah

Sarah and I often were able to move through each step of core reflection relatively quickly and efficiently. We were generally able to complete sessions in forty-five minutes, though a few sessions lasted the full hour. Out of our eight sessions, six began with problem situations centered on individual students and two were reflections upon inspirational situations. In this section I discuss how we used ideal situations as a starting point for reflection while also exploring the ways Sarah's core qualities may have assisted us during core reflection. I first, however, turn my attention towards the ways the immediate concerns of a participant, particularly Sarah, influenced visualization of ideals.

During core reflection, participants in this study began a description of their ideal classroom situation in much more narrowly defined terms. In moving from a problem situation towards an ideal, the first (and often only) comments provided seemed to revolve around how she wanted the source of the problem to change into something less problematic. For example, she might have talked about all the ways her students behaved better and how excited she was to have them learn the topic of the day. This approach to describing her ideal often excluded the participant from her own ideal situation and thus it was unclear to me what role she played in making this ideal come about.

Though Sarah was not the only one in this study guilty of narrowly defining ideals, she was perhaps the most consistent in this approach to ideal construction. I usually found myself asking Sarah: "Yes, but are you doing anything differently in your ideal or are you doing everything the same way?" Usually this type of prompt was all that was needed for Sarah to move towards a more agentic stance of envisioning an ideal. Our sessions on Colton, an "unresponsive" student Sarah and I discussed at the outset of this chapter, provides a good example of this shift from a narrow ideal towards one that was more expansive:

> T - Let's walk over to the ideal and talk about what you would want. So knowing he's Colton and you don't want to transform him into a student that he is not, what would be the ideal with him, given what you know of him and your history with him?
>
> S – Well, I guess it's not realistic, well, I guess it depends on his mood. It is [realistic] because sometimes he'll say, "Oh okay." It's never, "Okay, thank you so much. I will definitely work on that" like other students. But there's times where he says, "Okay." Nothing more than that. Nods his head and makes eye contact. So I guess in that specific situation, anything better than ignoring me would have been nice, but ideally I would like him to give me feedback. Let me know that he understands what I'm saying. Even ask a question, "Oh, so am I supposed to be here? Can you show me?" Any interaction really. Any human contact. And maybe eye contact and then, "Okay, thank you." All the kids have learned to say, if they receive a critique, "Okay, thank you." I don't even expect that [from Colton], but that would be cool.
>
> T - So it sounds like the main thing you want is some kind of human connection with him. So do you see yourself doing anything different in that ideal?
>
> S - That's where I hope this will help because I've brainstormed with other staff members

> and it's been hard because they are, “I don't really know what else we can do.” I don't know. Maybe. I don't know. I'm trying to find a way to relate it to something he would like. Maybe asking his friends: “Is Colton alright? Is there something we need to talk about?” Something like that. Maybe try to pinpoint if it’s a personal thing or maybe something external. Approaching the situation, I don't know what else I could do. I'm open to suggestions, but it's kind of a road block there because I don't know what else I could possible do.

In the above, Sarah initially excluded herself from her ideal. When I asked her what she was doing she brought up a few tentative ideas, but admitted she was not really sure what she might be doing in her ideal. In Sarah’s case, she simply admitted she did not know her role in her ideal, and this represented a more productive space to start in contrast to making a guess as to what she ought to be doing in her ideal. Though every participant fell into a pattern of excluding themselves from their ideal, I suspect Sarah’s willingness to be open about her shortcomings expedited the process of parsing her ideal versus ideals that may have actually been informed by outside sources (a pattern Allison fell into occasionally).

In addition to Sarah’s openness, her core quality of presence also aided us during our sessions. We operationalized this quality as a combination of her self-awareness, her poise, and her ability to stay attuned to the present moment when external factors may have otherwise tempted her to slide into thinking about the past or the future. Sarah and I seldom fell into “solution thinking” (see Chapter 4) because she seemed to be fully present with each step in core reflection. This lack of solution thinking is a key ingredient for successful core reflection sessions, due in part to the necessity of a participant visualizing and making contact with each step. Korthagen and Evelein (2015) stressed the importance of making contact with each step

because a discursive turn only takes place once the tension between the problem situation and ideal becomes "almost unbearable" to the participant (p. 160).

As student teaching progressed, however, Sarah began to notice some of the side effects of reliving the problem situation. For example, during one of our IPR sessions she commented how "I was reliving it and almost getting flustered again thinking about it." Sarah found maintaining this level of visualization sometimes made it difficult to return to the "here and now" to respond to some of my questions: "I get so into what I'm trying to say that I get off track and forget [what you asked]." These "getting off track" moments were occasional, but seldom did they inhibit our ability to progress through the steps of core reflection.

As a result of Sarah's ability to maintain her presence, not only in her teaching, but also during core reflection, she found "less and less problems to pick" for our core reflection sessions. Sarah partly attributed this to "getting more comfortable" in her role as a teacher, but she also admitted that "some of it is also I used the techniques we came up with and using those I was able to put away the obstacles I had already encountered so I think that was cool to see…wow this really works." Noticing a "payoff" from our core reflection may have also motivated Sarah to take our sessions seriously while at the same time encouraging her to use some of what we talked about in her teaching practice.

In light of Sarah's student teaching success, we spent our last two sessions reflecting upon situations she found ideal. In one example, Sarah came into a core reflection session seeking to talk about an interaction with a new student that had gone very well. As usual, we talked about what Sarah was thinking, feeling, and wanting during this ideal situation. I then moved her towards discussing an obstacle by asking her what kept her from achieving these sorts of ideals more often. She cited how this particular student had been "open to critique" whereas

other students in the same situation may not have been. Sarah mentioned how this student had gotten frustrated, but the student "didn't let it affect her." She went on to admit, however, that "if a student did let it affect them and shut me off and I did not understand why, then maybe I would take it personally and that would affect the ideal." I then asked her if any students fit this criteria and she brought up Colton again, who was involved in a problem situation we had reflected upon the week prior (see the excerpt that opened this chapter).

Though this was a bit of a detour from the typical order of steps, we eventually arrived at a concrete problem situation that allowed us to then move through the typical sequence of steps. Sarah was still able to bring in a situation that was most relevant to her, an important criteria that core reflection calls for, but we were able to move the conversation towards a concrete problem situation (in this case another one involving Colton) by asking what kept her from achieving inspirational situations more often. In this way, we allowed core reflection to remain relevant while also moving towards continued growth in the ways core qualities can continue to be mobilized to the benefit of Sarah and her students.

Discursive Findings

The above section represents an overview of some of the ways core reflection was more unique to Sarah's experience, including how her core quality of presence assisted in this process. Like every other participant in this study, however, core reflection revealed two discursive themes consulted during times of uncertainty. Additionally, as was also the case with other participants, core reflection led Sarah and I to a discursive response to these two themes. I now turn my attention to summarizing some of the discursive themes that arose during all eight of our sessions and the counter-discourses she crafted in responses to these discourses. I begin by

explicating Sarah's encounters with an internally persuasive discourse called "It's a Battle Every Day."

Internally Persuasive Discourse: "It's a Battle Every Day"

At the beginning of this chapter, I presented the conclusion of a core reflection session. This same session began with Sarah explaining the details of an interaction she had with Colton the previous week. In Sarah's problem situation, she attempted to coach Colton, only to have him feign that he had not heard her. Colton, a marching band participant who was struggling to keep up with the rest of the band, was a student we discussed on multiple occasions and her interactions with him often brought up an internally persuasive discourse of "It's a Battle Every Day." This discourse came up multiple times, not only with Colton, but with another struggling student, Rosalind, whom Sarah admitted she could not "identify with."

Near the end of Sarah's student teaching, she began to notice the origins of this internally persuasive discourse. In a discussion about obstacles to bringing out her presence and empathy with Colton, Sarah discussed the ways her "preconceived notions" that Colton was going to challenge her led to her abandoning her core qualities:

> T - What are some of the things that are blocking you from having your qualities come out more?
>
> S - His frustration, his insecurity with being in the spotlight. I think he probably felt a little attacked. "No that's not right, try it again" type of thing where he is kind of not understanding what we are doing. So I think his frustration probably made him have a little bit more a quick temper than maybe his usual [self]. And also I think my negligence to see that that was coming out. My preconceived notion that he was doing it just to challenge me because I had seen him do that before. So I think that past experience bled

over to this, even when it should be separated. Those are probably the big ones. I think he felt embarrassed, even though there's nothing to be embarrassed about. A lot of people don't understand a lot of things. But that was probably his own inner frustration.

T - We have this external obstacle and these are all the things you're saying he's probably experiencing. And then you have all these internal obstacles related to all the preconceptions you have that he is going to be a certain way. So what do you think about those obstacles? Specifically the internal ones?

S - Well the internal ones...obviously they're not completely accurate. And it's not fair for me to already have a chip on my shoulder about the situation. Because obviously I already felt threatened coming into it. I felt he had a chip on his shoulder so if I come into a problem situation like that then it's gonna go south on both of us really fast, which it did. So I think the internal ones are obviously my fault. And I think they can just tank you no matter how prepared you are.

In the above, Sarah seemed to acknowledge the detrimental effect of an internal obstacle that tells her she was going to be "challenged" by Colton. She also recognized the need to separate past experiences from current ones because she "already had felt threatened" before even engaging Colton.

Consulting "preconceived ideas" during moments of uncertainty was a recurrent theme in our core reflection sessions. These preconceived ideas seemed informed by an internally persuasive discourse that seemed to be activated quickly at the first sign of student resistance. Many times Sarah expressed suspicion of the motives of some of her students and these suspicions sometimes blocked her from drawing upon her qualities of presence, compassion, and

empathy. She pointed to her mom's experience as a substitute teacher and the way Sarah was raised as biographical sources that partly informed these suspicions:

> Well, my mom has been a substitute teacher and I think I've heard so many horror stories from her that I kind of maybe already expect the worse. I know she always has problems with students saying, "Oh, can I go to the bathroom?" And she'll say, "Okay" and they'll never come back. So instead of thinking students are being genuine about it, I think I usually jump to the conclusion that they aren't. There's one boy in one of the jazz bands who, it could be any day - "Can I go to the bathroom?" Okay, have you not learned by now that you have to go to the bathroom before you come to class? And I think, I don't know if it's true, but they always ask me and they never ask [my cooperating] teacher: "Can I go to the bathroom?" They probably think that I'm gonna say, "Yeah, go ahead." I feel like they try to go to me as an easy way to go. Or even marching band rehearsals. My parents brought me up like they were raised: If you were sick, you still went to school - "If you had a fever, if you can still breathe, you can still go to school" type of thing. And these kids will go to marching band rehearsal and they scrape their knee and have to sit out for two hours because they're so upset. I just look at them and go, "I could have never done that." If I *begged* my mom to do that she would have been, "Are you kidding me?" So I just think kids are a little different than how I was brought up and they're not used to somebody saying, "No." So then they're kind of shocked. "Really? I can't sit down?" Just like Rosalind in percussion. Who sits down when you play percussion? That's not a thing. You can't do that. So if you're injured then find another way to do that, yes, but if you're injured a year ago and you're still having complications, then get

> that figured out first of all. And second of all, it's highly unlikely that you're still kind of having that type of thing.

In the above, Sarah brought up several different examples, including one that involves Rosalind, where she felt unsure whether or not students were being genuine with her. She pointed to these examples as instances of students trying to avoid the kinds of challenges her parents raised Sarah to persevere through.

Earlier in her student teaching, Sarah came into a core reflection session with a problem situation that exemplified the ways this differing biography made working with Rosalind difficult. In this situation, Rosalind refused to take a test because she felt as though she had not been reminded to prepare in the days leading up to this exam. The rest of the class knew of the test and were prepared to take it, but Rosalind had been absent the day prior and was convinced this absence should have excused her from taking the test. After Sarah held firm that Rosalind had to take the test, Rosalind asked to drop the class. Sarah characterized this situation as an example of a recurrent "battle" between her and Rosalind:

> It's a battle every single day because I can't make it all about her. I can't. In class saying, "Why don't you come in?" Kind of babying her. I can't do it anymore. I couldn't take the time to say, "Why don't you come in and just we'll work on it?" I couldn't beg her in the moment to do it. I don't want to dwell on it. I don't want other students to suffer at her lack of effort. It's really her doing it to herself. So I kind of left it as it is. And that's why I was so adamant: "Please just stay and I'm not gonna write you a pass [to go drop the class] right now. You need to stay in class right now." And that was buying myself time so that later I could try to say, "You're being a little drastic here. Can we take it

back a step? I'm not trying to back you into a corner. I'm trying to make you succeed." I'm kind of taking the training wheels off and she's not reacting very well.

Here again, it seemed as though an internally discourse of "It's a Battle Every Day" informed this interaction as Sarah characterized it as a daily "battle" over whether she was going to allow Rosalind to dominate the classroom dynamics. Still, Sarah was present and self-aware enough to know she needed to "buy time" to "take it back a step" before deciding the next course of action with Rosalind.

Despite drawing on this quality, Sarah still had a difficult time seeing herself doing anything different with Rosalind in her ideal. Unlike some of our later sessions, which I described above, Sarah had not fully connected the ways her biography may have blocked her from making full use of her qualities:

> S - My ideal is just that: First of all she attempts the test. Second of all, that she does it, isn't satisfied, and says, "What are my options? Can I do this again?" Asking anything, really. I think if she would have asked any single question in the whole world regarding improving her score, I would have at least jumped on it and said, "Why don't you come in?" She's really the only one who can do it. I can't practice for her. I can't play the test for her. I think just really, the simplest version, is just her taking the initiative about her own grade and her own experience. In that situation really demonstrating that she's unsatisfied with the work that she's done. Because I feel that she's very satisfied with failing. And that's not an ideal that I identify with. So I guess in simple terms just showing any initiative towards improvement.
>
> T - Are you doing anything differently in that scenario? You said a lot things that suggested you were saying these things to her, but are you saying them or are you

commentating on what you think she needs to understand?

S - No, I think if she would have said, “I really can play it better.” Okay, well if you feel that way, can you come in during tutorial and work on it? “Yeah, sure.” And that would be great. That'd be fine. I would very quick to offer any extra help to anyone who wasn't satisfied with their performance. Except it's difficult to offer that when she tried to pull one over on me: “Oh you didn't tell me? I didn't listen to you?” Okay, well I'm less likely to offer that [help] right off the bat then. And maybe you should take some responsibility for knowing there was a test.

Unsure whether Rosalind was trying to “pull one over” on her and thus shirking responsibility for “knowing there was a test,” Sarah turned to a discourse that suggested this was another example of Rosalind “battling her.”

Though Sarah had described the above as her ideal, I was not completely convinced she was making contact with it from an idealized space, so I asked her if she had any interactions with Rosalind where she felt the outcome was ideal. Sarah agreed they had a few moments that were ideal and we located empathy as a common core quality across these ideal moments. When I asked Sarah how she might use empathy to create an ideal for this problem situation, Sarah once again took on a defensive posture rather than an empathetic one:

S - I didn't feel any empathy towards them because I knew I told them about the test. Oh, you didn't know you had the test? You did. You didn’t practice. No, I don't feel bad for you. Sorry. I would take time out of my busy day to help you if you would give me the effort of giving me the same respect. You come in on your own time if you're not keeping up with the class. But, if you're not gonna do that for me then I'm not gonna not help you, but I'm not gonna feel as much empathy for you—if you're gonna pretend that

you had no idea that this was happening. That's when I'm gonna cut my losses because I'm not even gonna waste my energy on that because I know I told you. So sorry but you're out of luck on that one.

T - I guess my definition of empathy isn't so much that you agree with what they're feeling as much as knowing what they're feeling.

S - And I truly don't even know if I do because I was never that student. Ever. I always, even if I forgot or even if I messed up, I was that student after school: "Can I please play it again? Can I please play it again?" *(Taps table.)* Can I come in at lunch?" That was me. So that's kind of what I expect.

T - You're recognizing that it's hard to empathize because of the fact that you were not necessarily that type of student. Empathy is not intuition, you're not somehow psychically knowing what's going on, but you have enough of your own experience with that person and also just being around other people to kind of gauge what they're thinking and what they're feeling. And so part of that is a sort of desire to investigate too. And there is all this body language that communicates one thing and then occasionally, every once in a while, something will come out verbally that says, "Oh, I love being in this class and I'm so excited for it." And you're like, "What?"

S - Exactly. It's happened now twice. So it's very strange.

T - So that can make it hard to empathize.

S - Yes, it's very hard.

T - Which one is the real/

S - /right because I don't identify with them. I don't identify with the way they handle it. I know what they're thinking: "Oh, you didn't say that." I have so many kids I couldn't

possibly remember what I said to this class. No, I do. But I can't identify, yeah, they're very conflicted. Very paradoxical.

T - They're inconsistent.

S - Yeah, definitely.

Though the above excerpt is lengthy, it illustrates a "doubling down" on an internally persuasive discourse of "It's a Battle Every Day" while also demonstrating an attempt at calibrating what it means to be "empathetic." Sarah initially considered taking an empathetic stance as feeling sad for her students and she seemed to be resistant to this approach; she instead wondered whether she should simply "cut her losses" rather than continue this "daily battle."

Authoritative Discourse: "It's a Sink or Swim Environment"

"Cutting her losses" was an option Sarah consulted during those moments when she felt unsure of the motives of students such as Colton or Rosalind. Cutting her losses seemed to represent an acknowledgement that an internally persuasive discourse of "It's a Battle Every Day" was ineffective. Rather than continue the "battle" for what seemed an indefinite amount of time, Sarah turned to an authoritative discourse that said, "It's Sink or Swim Environment" and, therefore, perhaps she ought to let her students "sink." In some respects, this discourse was similar to Allison's "Big Shoes" discourse, but the "Sink or Swim" discourse differed in that Sarah wrestled with being in a position of enforcing this discourse upon her students, particularly during those times when she was not sure what other action to take.

Our discussions on Rosalind and whether Sarah should just "cut her losses" eventually surfaced an authoritative discourse that suggested students should be forced to either "sink or swim." Unsure how to move ahead with Rosalind in light of her unwillingness to "swim," Sarah

began to echo the advice of other teachers in the music program regarding their expectations of students:

> And being in this program. It's a really an advanced program. So that's what the other teachers expect, too. That's the divide, the tier, in their ability levels. This program that they're trying to be in is so advanced already that they're already coming in behind. Their maturity level isn't where the teachers expect it to be. You're expected to really take matters into your own hands. And if you're not willing to try then there's somebody lined up to take your spot. So it's kind of a sink or swim environment. And they're not used to sinking or swimming. They're used to somebody giving them a flotation device. So it's a little tough.

Here Sarah seems to turn to expectations of those around her, even though those expectations can be a "little tough." Nevertheless, Sarah conjectured that students should not necessarily be given a "flotation device" if they are sinking in this environment.

Still, she questioned the merits of a "Sink or Swim" discourse and confessed to feeling she was "in limbo" because of how "hard" it is to "find a balance" between the expectations of the program while also "trying to teach to a spectrum" of student ability. Instead of attempting to rely solely on the suggestions of "other teachers," she sought to weigh their thoughts with her own ideals. She went on to explain that

> It's such a difficult situation because, and this is the first time I've dealt with [students falling behind] and I have to go with my ideals but also taking advice from the other teachers about things I wouldn't have done, but what they think I should do. So I'm kind of adding that all in. They thought I should leave [Rosalind] alone. They thought I should let her sink or swim and kind of let her fade into the background. It sounds so

> awful from an educational theoretical standpoint, but they were hoping that she would drop and make my life easier. And make the rest of the class move faster and have the other students have a better experience. Because she is taking away from other students. And it's so hard to spend time with her when other students are like, "Oh my god" and they're resenting her about it. The other teachers thought I should just leave her alone. [And] this was kind of before [when] I was still trying to be, "Oh, [I'm in] education, I'm just gonna make a difference in everyone's lives."

Despite feeling pressure from students and teachers to let Rosalind "sink," Sarah emphasized she still wanted to "go with her ideals." Yet she seemed to simultaneously recognize her ideals were still fluid. For example, she cited her initial philosophy of teaching as "I'm gonna make a difference in everyone's lives," but now she sought a less "rose colored" approach to teaching. Sarah's experiences with Rosalind seemed to provoke a change; she seemed to be weighing how much to allow a "sink or swim" discourse to influence her current vision of teaching.

Sarah felt a similar tension in her work with Colton, a marching band student I introduced at the outset of this chapter. Despite the fact that Colton had perfect attendance and seemed to work as hard as others, Sarah seemed surprised he wanted to remain in marching band. Other than being "left alone," she seemed unsure what his motives were:

> I think he wanted to be left alone, which is surprising because [the band] spends a lot of time practicing and his parents pay a lot of money for him to be in this program. He doesn't want to get any better. He doesn't want anyone to help him. It's been five weeks and he has shown marginal improvement. For him to be in the program is such an oxymoron. All of the other kids are striving for perfection. They want to be great.

Sarah described Colton's participation in the marching band program as an "oxymoron" because he "doesn't want to get any better" and thus he seemed determined to sink rather than "striving for perfection."

Unsure what to make of this "oxymoron," Sarah turned to her colleagues for advice. Other marching band faculty, however, also admitted to not knowing what do about Colton:

> We did a drill that was his Achilles' heel. He cannot make his feet move fast enough. So the director and all these staff people were all over him. I always stand back because I know calling him out [like that] doesn't work. Another staff member was like, "I don't know what to do. He cannot get it and he's hostile." All of those things add to the [obstacle of his unresponsiveness].

Rather than acting on her sense of empathy that "calling him out doesn't work," Sarah stepped back and watched others "jump all over him" following his mistakes. This seemed to be partly a response to an authoritative "Sink or Swim" discourse that suggested the correct course of action was to "cut your losses" if a student was not willing to put in the requisite effort to swim. For example, Sarah referenced an agreement between her and her cooperating teacher that exemplified the way she consulted this discourse when she did not know what else to do with Colton:

> My teacher and I kind of have a system if he sees me kind of coming up to him, if it's not getting better, I'll kind of say, "I don't know" and he'll say, "Colton, please" and actually kind of call him out in front of the ensemble. So if it's not listening to me, the director will kind of help me out. And then I usually go up and say, "See, that looked so much better, if you just keep doing that." And then saying, "Thank you. I knew you could do it, you just didn't want to do it with me, but you did it and it looks better."

This approach seemed to be a contradiction from her earlier observation that "calling out" Colton "didn't work." Nevertheless, mindful of what may or may not work with Colton, Sarah attempted to soften a "cut your losses" stance by reengaging Colton through the act of pointing out the ways he was doing better. Still I question whether this approach exacerbated or helped in establishing the "human contact" she was seeking from him. As student teaching progressed, however, Sarah began to consider and act upon a counterdiscourse of "being more personal" during uncertain moments, which was in contrast to stepping aside and letting other teachers dictate how she should act upon a "sink or swim" discourse.

Counter-Discourse: "Be Personal, But Don't Take it Personally"

During those moments when Sarah was confronted with uncertainty, she consulted an internally persuasive discourses that suggested it was going to be a "Battle Every Day," particularly with students such as Rosalind and Colton. This discourse, when left unresolved, seemed to summon a "Sink or Swim" authoritative discourse that asked her to "cut her losses" when a student did not demonstrate an ability to "swim" without a "flotation device." During the time Sarah and I worked together, she began to develop a counterdiscourse that called on her to use presence, empathy, and determination to personalize her instruction rather than "taking it personally" when students did not respond positively to her efforts to help them. I call this discourse "Being Personal, but Not Taking it Personally." In this section, I discuss a few examples of how Sarah began to consult this counterdiscourse during moments of uncertainty.

For Sarah, "Being Personal, but Not Taking it Personally" was most prominent when working with Colton. Sarah cited empathy as a key to activating this counterdiscourse. Turning to her empathy quality seemed to inspire an inner dialogue that deescalated subsequent

interactions with Colton. Sarah cited this empathy when I asked her what she might do next time she felt uncertain of what to do with Colton:

> I think addressing each moment or each opportunity of critique separately instead of the first one setting the tone for everything else. That might be how it is for him, but that shouldn't be how it is for me. Definitely not letting that drag me down. It might with him, but it's my job to kind of turn it around. And definitely being more empathetic towards his situation in the day. Kind of approaching it as, "Maybe I'll give him one more minute to cool off because I know he's had so many people around him" or "Maybe I'll walk away for a few minutes and let another staff member, maybe he's not upset with them or something." Just trying to be more aware of his feelings rather than it being, "I have to get this done," [which is an] I, me, me, me type of thing.

In the above, Sarah began to notice how turning to an internally persuasive discourse of "It's a Battle Everyday" may "set the tone" for all future interactions she has with Colton. She admitted he might choose to continue with a "battle" mindset, but it is her "job to kind of turn it around." Instead of Sarah taking his unresponsiveness as a personal attack on her or as she said as an "I, me, me, me thing," she instead looked to empathy to get a sense as to whether he needed a break or instead may have benefitted from hearing from another staff member

Though Sarah mentioned "letting another staff member" talk with Colton when working with him, I sense she framed this action in different terms than she did when she evoked a "sink or swim" discourse. Rather than considering the involvement of a staff member as a conclusive step before "cutting her losses," she instead conceived of the faculty as one resource of many that she could draw upon. First and foremost, however, Sarah wanted to turn to her empathy and presence before taking additional steps with Colton:

T - As you're picturing yourself going that through that ideal, what are some of the things that you're thinking?

S - I would be thinking and being really aware—I guess empathetic. Okay, Colton's been talked to four times by different staff members. He's probably pretty frustrated with himself. Maybe he needs some time to cool down. So maybe, even if this is going poorly, maybe talk to the person next to him and see if they can fix it or at least [they] say, "Hey, dude, you're making me look wrong because you're wrong." They usually can kind of fix themselves kind of well. So maybe hinting at it rather than coming right out and saying it. I think, yeah, empathetic would be a really good one. Feeling confident, not like, "Oh god. Oh, what is he gonna say?" Just coming at it with a clean slate. Just saying "Hey, this is what I think would help."

T - Yeah, so you're mixing in feelings, but you're also having core qualities mixed in there too. So were you thinking in your ideal, how can I be more empathetic?

S - Yeah, I think that would have really helped because...What I kind of realized as I was going through this was that I don't think it was a personal lash out at me. Because I think him and I get along just fine and I think that it's not just a "me" thing. It's kind of a whole staff kind of thing. He just doesn't like adults telling him he's not doing things correctly. So I think that empathizing with him rather than just being, "Why doesn't he like me?" I don't think [worrying about whether he likes me] is the best way to get there.

T - So you already talked about your core quality of empathy. Are there other qualities that are coming out?

S - Yeah, having more of a presence rather than like, "Oh, god." Just being really confident and having the knowledge to come at it a different way.

T - So what do you think about those qualities and how they come out in your ideal?

S - I think when I was in the problem that those things weren't happening. So now that they are happening I can clearly see solutions that I didn't see before. That's kind of what being a teacher has to be. Even though you might yell at a student, you can't hold onto that the next lesson. Give them the benefit of the doubt that they're gonna fix it. So I think leaving all those things at the door and just constantly coming back to this will be helpful.

In the above, Sarah articulated how important maintaining her "presence" is in leaving certain beliefs "at the door." In this case, she wished to turn away from a "why doesn't he like me" belief, one which seemed to reinforce an "It's a Battle Every Day" discourse. Additionally, rather than prematurely arriving at a conclusion that he is "sinking," as the "sink or swim" discourse might suggest, Sarah instead chose to give Colton space to "cool down" to "fix it" within a safer space among his peers.

Sarah took a similar stance with Rosalind, a student she had been advised by "other teachers" to let "sink" in the hopes she would drop the class and make Sarah's "life easier." Rather than "cutting her losses," Sarah instead spoke of giving space to Rosalind to "work things out on her own," while simultaneously communicating empathy to Rosalind's experience in and outside the classroom. In a session subsequent to the one where we discussed Rosalind's unwillingness to take a test, Sarah mentioned how she was successful using empathy when working with Rosalind:

It was kind of on her own. She came in with a different attitude on Tuesday and [after class] we went over all of the stuff that we had talked about [in core reflection]. She wasn't stand off-ish. She didn't have a health problem. She didn't have any of the other

> obstacles that she presented before. She came in pretty open and was asking questions and was really trying. And she came up to me after class and said, "I'd really like to make up my assignments." And then we decided she would come in on Thursday and [after practice] I told her, "Listen, isn't this a better feeling than feeling so upset and not participating and not doing anything? It's so simple. If you put forth the effort, you will do well." And she was, "Yeah, I can really see that I can do this. I just have to really work at it." And so she came in this morning and she said, "While you're doing this piece, can I have some extra time to practice?" [And I said,] "Yeah, sure." So I've been trying to give her her own space to work through things so that maybe she gets up to the speed of everyone else. We've given her a lot of parts that have a lot of rests in them just so that she doesn't get overwhelmed. So while we are rehearsing those parts that she doesn't play, I've given her other assignments that she can practice a certain part or work on this. And I think that helps because she's been getting more practice even inside of class [to catch up with the rest of the class] so that she doesn't have to put so much effort outside of class.

In previous core reflection sessions, Sarah and I had discussed the times she had expressed empathy to Rosalind to remind both of them of the times she had been successful in class. Though Sarah had previously been successful employing this type of empathy with Rosalind, she seemed to not always draw on this quality during the times she turned to "It's a Battle Every Day" or "Sink or Swim" discourses. Rather than becoming caught in these discourses once again, Sarah chose to turn to a discourse that said, "Be Personal, but Don't Take it Personally." During moments of uncertainty, this discourse suggested to Sarah that she ought to express empathy while also not holding Rosalind's past behavior against her. Though Sarah largely

credited Rosalind for the change in their interaction, I felt her framing of the situation was indicative of her counterdiscourse and the ways in which it may have played a role in sustaining a change between Sarah and Rosalind.

Core Reflection and the Phenomenon of Learning to Teach

Core reflection with Sarah revealed two discourses she often consulted during moments of uncertainty: "It's a Battle Every Day" and "It's a Sink or Swim Environment." Sarah's qualities of empathy and presence, in part, assisted her in creating a counterdiscourse that reminded her of the merits of "Being Personal, but Not Taking it Personally." With these discourses in mind, this section looks at some of the lessons Sarah learned through these discursive encounters and how these lessons may be expanded upon based on what we know about teacher education, specifically Sarah's experience of occupational socialization and learning to be a teacher.

Socialization

Sarah mentioned on a several occasions how she "could not identify with" Rosalind and Colton and their "satisfaction with failing" because she was "never the student who wouldn't ask for help" in high school. She commented that her parents "raised her to be tough" and that made her feel "different than these kids." She also mentioned how she empathized with other students who were waiting on Rosalind and Colton to catch up because, when Sarah was a student, she "felt like waiting for slower students was a waste of time." Finally, she also confessed she had heard many "horror stories" of student misbehavior from her mom, who was a substitute teacher. Many of these thoughts point to Sarah's biography and these beliefs seemed to at least partially inform the discourses she turned to during moments of uncertainty.

As Britzman (1986) reminded us, teachers "bring their implicit institutional biographies – the cumulative experience of school lives – which, in turn, inform their knowledge of the student's world, of school structure, and of curriculum" (p. 443). Certainly the behaviors of Sarah's students could be interpreted in a number of different ways, but she chose interpretations that were more resonant with discourses she carried with her during student teaching. This way of drawing on biography is not unusual since novice teachers "frequently conceptualize their own schooling experiences as prototypical and generalizable toward the teaching profession" (Fajet et al., 2005, p. 718). This is problematic because discourses often result in teachers seeing what they expect to see (Loughran, 2001). In this case, without reflection, Sarah's internally persuasive discourse of "It's a Battle Every Day" partly resulted in her anticipating a "battle" with certain students on a daily basis and this may have resulted in an overly defensive posture. This defensive posture may have made her quick to "cut her losses" to let them "sink" when she perceived students such as Rosalind and Colton "battling her" when confronted by uncertain moments.

As Sarah began to evoke a counter-discourse of "Being Personal, but Not Taking it Personally," I noticed a shift in the ways she perceived Colton and Rosalind. She described this change as expanding her vision to include other possible interpretations of her students:

> And I think being able to reflect on [a problem situation, an ideal, and my core qualities], as a whole, I was able to kind of understand students on a different level and understand myself on a different level and kind of, instead of being so narrow minded, like being, "This is the way I see it. These are my views. These are my policies."

Sarah seemed to use core reflection as a method to reflect in a more holistic manner which helped her move herself beyond solely focusing on the ways her biography influence her (e.g., "this is the way I see it") during uncertain teaching moments.

Teaching and Learning

As Katie learned to "take a breath" during difficult moments, Sarah similarly learned to "gather herself" when she anticipated student resistance. This "gathering" seemed to be a way she evaluated an uncertain situation to decide whether or not she was going to use her qualities or was instead going to turn to discourses such as "It's a Battle Every Day" or "It's a Sink or Swim Environment." Sarah summarized this process as getting her "presence centered":

> I really lesson plan in my head what I'm going to say because I don't want to get up there and get flustered anymore when [Colton's] not responding to me. I think about what I'm gonna say and if he doesn't say anything to me then that's totally fine. Kind of like almost talking to myself and getting my presence centered. I kind of have to put my brave face on before I go because it's intimidating. Just the title of student teacher makes things intimidating. With that, just having a plan really helps me be more confident.

Sarah referred to talking to herself, formulating a plan, and actualizing her presence as methods for addressing the "intimidating" status of student teacher.

Though it never came up directly as an obstacle in our core reflection sessions, Sarah often referenced discomfort with her uncertain status as a student teacher. She referred to her role of student teacher as being in "limbo." In absence of other ways to interpret and cope with this limbo status, Sarah occasionally drew upon her own memories of student teachers growing up. Based on her own experience with student teachers in high school and how "they didn't know anything," she seemed to assume her own students would treat her in the ways she

observed her own student teachers treated when she was in high school. In light of these memories, she occasionally mentioned suspicions she had during uncertain moments and how she anticipated her students challenging her in these moments.

She went on to speak of her ambivalence towards her role as a student teacher by commented on how "difficult" it is to negotiate the tension between experiencing students who "think they're your friend" and then later needing to "rat on them" by calling their parents. Regarding this phenomena of being a novice teacher as an "uncertain" role, Floden and Buchman (1996) commented:

> Recognising their uncertain intellectual footing, teachers may feel that they have little reason to contradict pupils who assert their own interpretation. For beginners, uncertainty about managerial authority is more salient than uncertainty about intellectual authority (Veenman, 1984). Novice teachers want students to like them and may even feel more affinity with students than with colleagues. Yet they have to maintain discipline and assign grades. Often, new teachers rightly doubt their capacity to control students. The common advice not to smile until Christmas suggests a solution that reduces uncertainty, but such simple escapes from self-doubts may not be the most appropriate ways of coping. (p. 376)

As Floden and Buchmann suggested, novice teachers often seek and receive advice to cope with uncertainty and may be given "tried and true" simple techniques such as "do not smile until Christmas." To cope with tensions such as being a friend versus being a teacher, Sarah sought a sense of "certainty" from other teachers in her department, particularly with regards to a "plan" to follow for students such as Rosalind and Colton.

At the outset of student teaching, Sarah may have considered "sink or swim" discourses as one "plan" or "routine" endorsed by other teachers in the school. Floden and Buchmann (1996) posited routines as "a specific response to the general problems of uncertainty" (p. 379). Katie, a participant I discussed in Chapter 4, spoke of "falling back" on routines advocated by certain discourses during "uncertain" moments. Sarah conceptualized this experience a bit differently, referring instead to a pressure to automatically take action in every moment even though she recognized this was often not necessary:

> I'm still getting used to taking everything in and spitting something out that's going to make sense. I'm not used to being able to take a breath and say what I need to say. I feel like I need to say something all the time and I don't. They know the expectations and they don't get out of control after ten seconds of you gathering your thoughts.

This behavior is, however, similar to Katie's need to "fall back" on discourses because it calls to mind what Korthagen and Evelein (2015) referred to as "downloading," which is "taking action without awareness, or of routine and automatic actions" (p. 149). They went on to conclude, through citing Shön (1987), that downloading results in "tackling situations from routine because of the constant pressure to act," regardless of whether or not these actions are effective (Korthagen & Evelein, 2015, p. 150).

As student teaching progressed, Sarah began to expand her range of action beyond "downloaded routines." Greater success with her core qualities of empathy, presence, and determination led Sarah to draw upon these qualities more often during uncertain situations that otherwise could have become problems if she had chosen "downloaded" actions informed by limiting discourses such as "It's Gonna be a Battle Every Day" and "It's a Sink or Swim Environment." For example, in our final interview, Sarah spoke of a situation when she was

asked to substitute for another teacher that caused her to "flashback" to a prior core reflection session:

> I was like, "Wait a second. This is kind of similar." So I made sure I knew everything I had to know. It was definitely something like, "This is ringing a bell from what we had talked about." So I can proactively use [my qualities] so I don't get myself in the same mess I already did. So that was really nice and really cool. Kind of going through this, okay there is more than one answer. That more than one answer is basically working backwards because you know what actually happened in one situation, but you can actually.... it's almost like having hindsight because you can kind of go back through and say, "Okay, if I had done this then this would have been different. And then next time, you should do this because then maybe it would help the situation." It was almost like having hindsight for the future. I think it really helped a lot.

Previously Sarah and I discussed how she had "lost her teacher presence" and did not ask for all the necessary details of substituting for another teacher in a different subject area. Due in part to core reflection, she began to learn how to maintain her presence before, during, and after uncertain situations. Sarah's presence quality seemed to facilitate a process of gathering all of the details from her cooperating teacher before walking into a new teaching environment. It also allowed her to stay composed enough to realize this situation "rang a bell" and reminded her of a previous situation. That said, even though the situation may have "rung a bell," the context and details of how this situation played out were both different enough that a simple "routine" would have been insufficient. Sarah found she needed "more than one answer" for all of the various situations and students she may encounter as a substitute and her core qualities (and perhaps also her counter discourse of "Be Personal, But Don't Take it Personally") afforded her that

flexibility. Instead of "downloading" a routine, she was able to apply the most essential lesson of our core reflection session (that she needed to apply her core quality of presence) to this novel situation. As a result, it felt as though Sarah had somehow gained hindsight for an uncertain future.

Addressing Uncertainty with Core Reflection

Sarah made a few notable shifts during the time her and I worked together. She seemed to shift from "downloading" a stance that suggested students were going to challenge her towards one that instead asked her to "be personal but not to take it personally." She also seemed to begin to perceive a diversity of student outcomes that extended beyond only "sink or swim." Sarah attributed the change, specifically with Colton, as "partly [a result of core reflection] and partly working with him in class time, because we got to know each better in that environment, which is less pressure [than marching band]." In this section, I discuss some of the ways core reflection may have assisted in changes similar to these.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed how Sarah initially viewed ideals in more narrow terms because she often tended to focus solely on the ways her students should change rather than the ways she could change. This was one important change that core reflection seemed to support. Sarah, like others in this study, began student teaching with a "looking out the window" stance, which DuFour (2004) calls an "if only approach" which "bases hopes for improvement on others." Sarah felt she could achieve her ideal, "if only" her students would cooperate. As Sarah and I spent more time with core reflection, she began to shift towards a "looking in the mirror" stance, which "focuses on conditions that lie within the [teacher's] influence" (p. 1). For example, an IPR session revealed how Sarah viewed her options expanding beyond simply wishing for changes and the positive impact this shift seemed to have with her and Colton:

> We got to a real good spot that was feasible and I tried to incorporate and it goes to show that when you are backed into a corner that there are other options out there. Using more of these approaches helps. It's been a few weeks since we did this reflection. I've seen him get better and him and I haven't been butting heads anymore.

No longer was she feeling "backed into a corner" and she attributed this to getting to a "real good spot" by the end of a core reflection session. She also mentioned how she had simply felt "better" and more "calm" by the end of our session and, "still felt better" about it weeks later. This new found equanimity echoes the experience others in this study felt and may have played a role in helping Sarah let go of a "battle posture" towards students such as Rosalind and Colton.

In addition to altering the way she made meaning of her environment, Sarah also was beginning to become particularly adept at calling upon multiple complementary core qualities and using these in concert with various instructional strategies, as the excerpt at the outset of this chapter demonstrated. Unlike Allison who called upon strategies and core qualities as "bite sized" moves that would bring about greater student engagement, even if those strategies were at odds with one another, Sarah called upon empathy, presence, and determination in complementary ways and used grouping and modeling strategies as a means to manifest these qualities. This approach suggests that Sarah seemed to view core qualities and knowledge of instructional strategies as part of a larger holistic vision of teaching.

Summary

This chapter looked at Sarah's experience of core reflection both as a process and as a way to address uncertainty. Sarah seemed open to both aspects of core reflection and seemed to do well entertaining the possibilities explored during our sessions together. Exploring "new

thought processes" was perhaps the most salient to Sarah. When I asked her about our time working together, she commented on how core reflection helped her consider new possibilities:

> I remember at the beginning, myself saying, "Oh I did this or I would do this" but I kept thinking, "Wow, do I sound like I'm not open to new suggestions? Because I sound pretty narrow minded." I think that did open up as the semester went on. I was more open to different thought processes and thinking just differently. I think I would have went home and just pondered and pondered these challenging situations and gone around in circles, not knowing what else I could have done. But I really do feel like I've had closure and I think [core reflection] helped me grow faster than I would have without it. I think I've become more confident more quickly than I would have been without it.

Here Sarah pointed out that without core reflection she would have "pondered and pondered" problem situations, remaining in the realm of the uncertain indefinitely. Instead, Sarah used core reflection to locate an expanded openness towards "thinking differently," a change that seemed to benefit Colton and Rosalind in particular, if not many other unnamed students. She spoke of coming into student teaching with "rose colored glasses" and then, after a few weeks of teaching, realized that she could not "change everyone's lives." While it may be true that a teacher cannot always be a transformative agent for every student they encounter, I believe (perhaps idealistically) every teacher has an opportunity and the potential to be a transformative agent for every student they encounter.

It likely is too ambitious to suggest Sarah arrived upon this distinction during our time working together. Still, I believe her work in reflecting about Rosalind and Colton may have taught her that there are other possibilities beyond giving up on "challenging" students. Either

way, she seemed to appreciate the role core reflection played in her student teaching, albeit after some initial reservations:

> I think in the beginning I was a little skeptical because I thought it might become a situation that might be unrealistic, but then [as the semester progressed], something would happen and then I would be excited to bring it in. I would be like, "I'm totally gonna talk about this on Monday [during our weekly core reflection session]." Because I wanted to figure it out because I don't know what I could have done differently. It just became really interesting because I had never heard about [core reflection] before and it really did help talk through problems in hindsight and the future.

Despite being skeptical of the usefulness of focusing on strengths as a means to address uncertainty, Sarah came to see how core reflection helped her address problems. Sarah used it to expand her vision of the possible, both in "hindsight and the future" and thus, it seems in this case, core reflection seemed to be one answer to Intrator's (2006) call for teacher educators to "provide spaces where future teachers can do the important work of examining what is, what can be, and the implications of their choices for themselves as teachers, for the children they teach, and for the schools and communities we hope to build" (p. 1037).

Chapter 8: Common Threads and Concluding Thoughts

> I remember as soon as [my cooperating teacher] said ["could you do bus duty for me?"], it was kind of like [the] substituting [situation] is in the back of my mind and so I thought about all of the things that we identified as the obstacle—I wasn't specifically prepared for that type of position. I didn't know the policies. I didn't know my job description. I didn't know all these things. And [last time] all that unknowing made me lose my teacher presence. So [this time] I just said, "Okay, I have no problem doing [bus duty for you], but I want to know, what is my role? Who do I call if something happens? What's my boundaries?" I asked her more questions so I felt more prepared. It was kind of funny because there was an incident [even though] she said she had never had an incident [during bus duty] in her 35 years of being there. And I knew a little bit about what I was allowed to do. And I think that made me more confident that I could step into the situation that could have potentially been scary. The [bus duty] situation was a little terrifying and we could have talked about it in a core reflection, but I never lost my teacher presence, well maybe a little bit, but because of core reflection, I was like, "I need to know these things." I proactively helped myself so much that the situation didn't get extremely out of hand. There were things that still could have gone better, obviously, but knowing that really helped the actual outcome. I knew I was doing what I was supposed to and I had the confidence to deal with it.

In the above interview excerpt, Sarah commented on an uncertain situation that echoed a previous situation we had discussed during a core reflection session. Confronted with a new (albeit similar) situation, Sarah addressed this uncertainty by maintaining her qualities of "teacher presence" and "being proactive" to intervene when a few students began to harass

another student. Rather than letting the situation "get extremely out of hand," Sarah turned to a discourse that allowed her "teacher presence" as opposed to freezing or fleeing this uncertain situation.

I sense these are the kinds of results participants may remember going forward. Though I spent a good portion of this study unpacking and explaining the discursive phenomena consulted during times of uncertainty, the student teachers I worked with seemed to be less concerned with the discourses they turned to during uncertain moments. Instead, these teacher candidates were more concerned with "what works" and, in this respect, each participant found core reflection useful. In the words of one participant, core reflection gave her "something to go off of" during uncertain moments of teaching. In this chapter, I review the common threads of these kinds of experiences and consider some conclusions between those broad experiences and their implications for teacher education. Finally, I provide an epilogue to Katie's, Allison's, Nicole's, and Sarah's journeys of learning to teach and subsequently consider future directions for core reflection.

Summarizing the Study

This dissertation explores and presents some of the intricacies of the ways in which student teachers experienced core reflection. This goal was approached by looking at the research question: How do preservice teachers experience core reflection during student teaching? I found student teachers consulted discourses during moments of uncertainty and core reflection may have played a role in offering additional discourses to consider during these same uncertain moments.

Core Reflection in Practice

I coached four participants using core reflection during their student teaching. Two of the participants, Katie and Nicole, were elementary school student teachers and the other two, Sarah and Allison, were high school student teachers. Nicole also sought a license addition in ESL (English as a Second Language) and taught in an ESL middle school classroom for the final six weeks of her student teaching. In this section, I describe each step of core reflection while also weaving in the prominent ways in which these teacher candidates may have experienced some of these steps.

Core reflection consists of reflecting upon four basic aspects of teaching situations: (1) a problem; (2) an ideal; (3) core qualities of the teacher (i.e., character strengths); and (4) obstacles to putting core qualities into practice. A final step of core reflection typically consists of a role-play to test core qualities. Though Katie, Allison, Nicole, and Sarah experienced these steps in their own ways, their experiences share some common ground. Each initially approached reflection upon a problem situation as an opportunity to address uncertain situations that troubled them. Often these situations were cases of individual students not keeping up with the rest of the class, though occasionally problems could be categorized broadly as classroom management issues. In this study, problem situations were not always described in concrete ways, so I coached participants to determine what I call a "tipping point," which is a specific moment when a situation turns problematic.

Envisioning an ideal teaching situation typically follows discussion of a problem situation. I noticed participants often began ideal construction by envisioning the context or student behavior changing without mentioning the ways in which their actions had changed. Often I would follow up by asking, "Yes, and do you see yourself doing anything different in

your ideal?" This question occasionally resulted in a participant engaging in what Korthagen and Evelein (2015) called "solution thinking," which is focusing heavily on finding the "right way" to address a situation. Core reflection procedure calls for a more balanced approach by not only thinking about situations (and possible solutions), but also upon the feelings and desires associated with these situations. Korthagen and Evelein (2015) used a metaphor of "the elevator" to describe the process of reflecting on thoughts, feelings, and desires (i.e., what a participant wants to happen in the situation).

During core reflection, a participant next considers character strengths (i.e., core qualities) witnessed during an ideal. This study found empathy, authenticity, and creativity to be common core qualities cited by participants. Usually, before proceeding through subsequent steps, participants and I used the elevator to arrive upon a shared understanding of what a quality meant to them. For example, one participant conflated "creativity" with "originality" and we subsequently calibrated our definition of this quality to check whether this quality best represented her vision of it.

After identifying core qualities, core reflection asks a participant to reflect upon obstacles that may have blocked the expression of these qualities. In this study, participants often identified student behavior as an obstacle. At times, participants also expressed worries that their cooperating teacher might consider the expression of core qualities too much of a deviation from classroom norms. We identified each as potential external obstacles. As Korthagen and Evelein (2015) pointed out, asking a participant for his thoughts on external obstacles often surfaces limiting beliefs (i.e., internal obstacles). I found these limiting beliefs often had a discursive quality to them and this study explored these discourses and the ways in which core reflection may have spoken back to them.

Following a discussion of limiting beliefs, a participant revisits the ideal and core qualities to see if these strengths addressed the obstacle. This step includes stepping back to look at each part of core reflection and making particular note of the limiting beliefs informing the internal obstacle and the core qualities informing the ideal. Usually this "stepping back" process involves what Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) called "confrontation," which is a process of encountering and accepting one's limiting belief(s) (and the discourses that may inform them). During confrontation, a participant may choose to either become "dragged" into these beliefs or, instead, align themselves with their core qualities.

As a concluding step, core reflection procedure calls for a participant to attempt a role-play of a problem situation to practice using their core qualities. A coach attempts to embody the external obstacle (e.g., behaving as the student who evoked the limiting belief) and a participant uses their core qualities (e.g., empathy) to address the external obstacle in a new way rather than getting caught in the limiting beliefs (e.g., "this student is being disrespectful"). Following this role play, a participant concludes by noting how they are thinking, feeling, and what they were wanting (i.e., what they desired) during the role-play.

Literature and Methods

The literature on core reflection is limited. Core reflection was first mentioned prominently in the literature a little more than a decade ago (see Korthagen, 2004). As a new method of reflection, prior publications either attempted to describe the results of core reflection (see Korthagen, Kim, & Greene, 2013) without going into significant detail on the process of core reflection or instead focused on the theory and procedure of core reflection without presenting a detailed description of results associated with core reflection (see Korthagen & Evelein, 2015). Though it has undergone only limited study in the United States since its

introduction, most of what has been learned regarding its use suggests core reflection may have the potential to positively influence teaching and learning, both with teachers and their students (see Korthagen, Kim, & Greene, 2013).

A few notable examples illustrate some of the ways in which core reflection has assisted teachers in expanding upon previously limiting beliefs and behaviors. One example was a case study by Meijer and others (2013) which found previously negative self-concept and limiting beliefs became reframed through the use of core reflection. This reframing seemed to facilitate a positive behavioral change in the classroom for the participant in the study. Additionally, Attema-Noordewier and others (2013), in a study with elementary school teachers and their students, found increased self-efficacy and increased feelings of autonomy for the teachers who used core reflection. Furthermore, their study demonstrated that teachers who used core reflection saw increases in their students' working and communication skills and attitudes.

Much of the literature on core reflection reflects these two studies. That said, these studies look at teacher beliefs and behaviors without exploring broader structural implications with regards to discourse and the influence discourse may have on the ways in which teachers address uncertainty. Therefore, previous literature implies, but does not yet demonstrate, the influence core reflection may have on the ways in which teachers and student teachers negotiate discourse and uncertainty.

The study that informs this dissertation adds to and extends the above literature by suggesting the application of core reflection may assist student teachers in interrogating and moving beyond the limiting discourses they may consult during student teaching. This finding (and others I describe in the next section) was informed by critical qualitative methodology (see Carspecken, 1996). This meta-theory was used to analyze thirty-two core reflection sessions,

twelve interviews, and eight "interpersonal process recall" (IPR) sessions (see Kagan, 1984 for more on IPR). These audio and video data sources totaled sixty hours by the end of the twelve-week study.

Findings

Limiting beliefs surfaced in core reflection often seemed to draw upon discourse. Using Bahktin's (1981) concept of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses as a theoretical framework, I found that core reflection unearthed four internally persuasive discourses, four authoritative discourses, and two counter-discourses. Britzman (2003) differentiated the two by first defining authoritative discourse as one which "demands allegiance, an a priori discourse within a variety of social contexts and partly determines our 'symbolic practices' or normative categories that organize and disorganize our perceptions." Internally persuasive discourses, conversely, "pulls one away from norms and admits a variety of contradictory social discourses" (p. 42). Sullivan and others (2009) extended this definition by defining authoritative discourse as "any discourse which can legitimately (from the participants' point of view) control and direct the discourse and the participants' actions without the participants questioning this control" (p. 330). Internally persuasive discourse, in contrast, is that internal space within authoritative discourse that is open to questioning.

This study found that internally persuasive discourses and authoritative discourses consulted during moments of uncertainty could be altered or countered through core reflection. These altered or countered discourses did not erase prior discourses, but rather wrote on top of these pre-existing discourses. As Davies (1993) contended, "new discourses do not simply replace the old as on a clean sheet. They generally interrupt one another, though they may also exist in parallel, remaining separate, undermining each other perhaps, but in an unexamined

way" (p. 11). Davies adopted the metaphor of palimpsest to describe this phenomenon. I found this palimpsest metaphor to describe aptly the ways in which new discourses were drawn upon in ways that were not always independent of pre-existing discourses. With these general aspects of discourse in mind, I next describe how this discursive process unfolded for each participant during their student teaching.

At the beginning of her student teaching, Katie turned to an internally persuasive discourse "These Kids Should Just Know Better" during uncertain situations featuring "difficult students." She expressed frustration when students would ask "ridiculous questions" and, as a result, sometimes wondered, "Why am I even trying?" She also encountered and began to interrogate an authoritative discourse that asked her to "Do the Right Thing." Often she looked to her cooperating teacher to model the "right things" which typically consisted of "stern" approaches to student discipline. Rather than dwelling on these discourses, core reflection seemed instead to help her tap into her strength of empathy. This quality helped her create a counterdiscourse that asked her to "Tune in to What My Students Need" rather than acting upon those internally persuasive and authoritative discourses previously encountered and considered as viable options.

Allison initially addressed a "Big Shoes to Fill" authoritative discourse by consulting an internally persuasive discourse during uncertain situations that called on her to "Be the Cool Student Teacher." Eventually she found "Being the Cool Student Teacher" insufficient for coping with the uncertainty associated with how to "fill the shoes" of those who came before her, including her cooperating teacher and previous student teachers. Our core reflection sessions eventually helped her amplify her internally persuasive discourse in a way that suggested specific actions rather than mere assimilation or resistance. Rather than focusing solely on

whether she was “cool” or “filling big shoes,” “Call and Response” gave Allison permission to use her authenticity quality with her students. This newly amplified internally persuasive discourse provided an actionable way to be true to her personality while at the same time managing students in a manner that helped her feel more at peace with addressing the “Big Shoes” authoritative discourse.

I found Nicole to consult an internally persuasive discourse that told her “I Like the Way I Teach” during uncertain teaching moments. This internally persuasive discourse advised her to move forward with instruction even though some of her elementary and ESL students resisted her instruction. She characterized resistant students as “disrespectful” and “misbehaving on purpose.” Nicole and I also unearthed an authoritative discourse that told her she “Just Needed to Get Things Done.” This discourse often told her she could not differentiate her instruction or allow her personality to come out fully because it would hinder her ability to “get things done.” Through the actualization of Nicole’s strengths, she began to modify and amplify her internally persuasive discourse into a new discourse that asked her to “See Them as People, Not Just Students.” Using her strength of “being personable,” Nicole began to use this discourse to build mutual trust between her and her students.

Over the course of Sarah’s student teaching, an internally persuasive discourse of “It’s a Battle Every Day” was increasingly countered by a discourse that asked her to “Be Personal with Students, But Not Take It Personally” if students challenged her. Sarah also encountered an authoritative discourse during moments of uncertainty that told her “It’s a Sink or Swim Environment.” The culture of the music program suggested that students who did not “swim” should drop out and Sarah initially struggled with putting this expectation into practice. In response to these circumstances, core reflection seemed to help Sarah realize she was

approaching a few of her students "with a chip on her shoulder" because she assumed the ones who were not "swimming" wanted to "battle her." Combining her strengths of poise, determination, and empathy, she began to relate to her students in more personal ways while simultaneously telling herself to maintain her poise if some of her students gave her "the cold shoulder."

These four cases show a varied experience of the ways core reflection helped uncover the kinds of discourses confronted during uncertain moments. Each participant expressed their appreciation for the ways core reflection assisted with navigating student teaching. Findings suggested that, while not all limiting discourses were countered, they were at least explored and interrogated. Next, I consider some of the common threads between these findings.

Considering the Experiences Together

This study suggests a few trends with respect to the ways in which core reflection may be experienced by student teachers. One trend points to how core reflection may have addressed discourses consulted during uncertain moments, while another indicates how it may have been experienced as a process of reflecting on teaching practice. As a reflection tool, core reflection seemed to be appreciated as an approach that addressed the "emotional drama" and "uncertainties" of student teaching, even though strategies and qualities were not always put into practice in the classroom. Core reflection also seemed to provide benefits as a process for uncovering and interrogating internally persuasive and authoritative discourses consulted during these uncertain moments. I discuss both in this section and offer a heuristic to aid in understanding these discursive dynamics. I first, however, turn my attention to the ways in which core reflection was broadly experienced as a way to address uncertainty and the emotional drama of teaching.

Addressing Uncertainty and the Emotional Drama of Learning to Teach

Each participant, at one time or another, began their core reflection session wrestling with feelings of insecurity provoked by uncertainty. Dotger (2015) asserted that "uncertainty comes in two forms – from the visibility and accountability associated with one's professional responsibilities and from the realization that one's profession is full of situations where decisions are based on often-partial knowledge and actions are taken real-time" (p. 10). Though each participant coped with this uncertainty in their own way, they all looked to our core reflection sessions to at least address it, if not eliminate it.

Each participant commented on how well core reflection "worked" to address the uncertain moments they experienced in the classroom. It seemed the participants who felt core reflection most helped in addressing uncertainty were those who employed core qualities in their teaching rather than using core reflection to provide step-by-step strategies. Sarah and Katie both commented on how they were able to employ their qualities back into the classroom in ways that helped them address insecurity. As for Allison, she felt her core qualities gave her "something to go off of" (i.e., something to complement her classroom management and lesson plans), yet admitted she seldom used the strategies we talked about in core reflection. However, in contrast to the other three participants, Nicole was sometimes ambivalent about how to use her qualities in the classroom, but felt the "times where we came up with [step-by-step strategies] were a lot easier to do" in the classroom.

One area that may have influenced whether uncertainty was fully addressed may have been whether participants drew upon multiple complementary qualities when faced with recurrent or novel problem situations. Allison and Nicole often drew upon one quality to address a situation whereas Sarah and Katie, as they progressed in student teaching, would draw upon

multiple qualities to address potentially problematic scenarios. As the following example from a core reflection shows, Katie seemed to combine creativity with empathy in ways that seemed to encourage a more sustainable way to interact with a student:

> [I'll] get that creativity flowing and like once I start to kind of get a nibble, then I can start to use my empathy and use my—I don't know....I want him to know I care and him to be engaged and so...so yes, I definitely can see myself just moving on anyways and pushing through and just choosing to work on the empathy and the creativity. Just getting them engaged would start an escalation [towards the ideal].

Sarah took a similar stance towards the end of our work together. She talked about starting with "maintaining teacher presence" and then using empathy to gauge what her next actions should be when working with students.

Though the literature on core reflection is silent on the compatibility between multiple core qualities, Korthagen and Evelein (2015) stressed a participant ought to strive towards aligning their ideals. That being said, it is too early to say whether combining core qualities makes a difference in the ways a participant may experience core reflection or even why some employ this strategy while others do not. These questions represent additional aspects of core reflection that may benefit from further inquiry.

Another aspect of core reflection that participants cited as a helpful outcome of core reflection was with respect to the ways it assisted them in navigating the "emotional drama" of student teaching. Admittedly, I initially underappreciated this side of core reflection. I can now more fully appreciate its importance, particularly with how teachers are often left to their own devices to find ways to navigate this aspect of their teaching. As Intrator (2006) observed, "Contending with the personal and emotional layers of teaching falls outside the bounds of

conventional teacher development because these qualities are often construed as being located in the realm of the private and the personal" (p. 234). Rather than remaining fully private and personal, this study suggests that core reflection instead may have helped with some of the emotional layers of teaching. Additionally, participants experiencing a shift from frustration to equanimity over the course of our sessions and commented on how they, by the end of a session, felt "less backed into a corner," "calmer," "more settled," and "less like a wounded animal."

Tracking the emotional progression of a participant was relatively straightforward as I asked participants how they felt at the beginning and at the end of sessions. Nevertheless, most participants in this study seemed to err on the side of being less detailed in their emotional experience. I wondered if this reticence to probe deeper into emotions had to do with the notion that emotional aspects of teaching should fall outside the realm of professional conversation (Intrator, 2006). Unfortunately, I did not follow up with this particular line of inquiry, but it bears investigation in future studies.

Core Reflection as a Process of Surfacing Discursive Tensions

In our core reflection sessions, a participant encountered various discourses over the course of their student teaching and began to either expand upon those discourses or employ counter-discourses to "speak back" to the ones they no longer wished to follow. The discourses they encountered during student teaching took one of two forms: internally persuasive or authoritative. Authoritative discourses often are "shared unquestionable traditions" (Sullivan et al., 2009) that "demand allegiance" (Britzman, 2003). Internally persuasive discourses, conversely, are those spaces internal to authoritative discourses that are seen to be capable of being questioned (Sullivan et al., 2009). Thus, internally persuasive discourses often are encountered as that smaller cluster of beliefs within authoritative discourses that are open to

interrogation (Meachum, 2016). Participants seemed to employ one of two kinds of responses to the discourses they encountered. They either amplified their preexisting internally persuasive discourse (see Figure 8 below) or created a new counter discourse that seemed to "speak back" to internally persuasive discourses (see Figure 9 below).

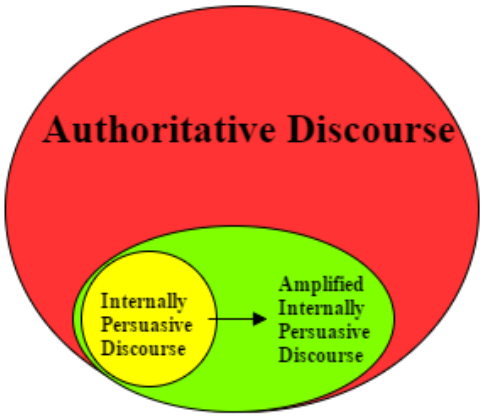

Figure 8: Amplified Internally Persuasive Discourse

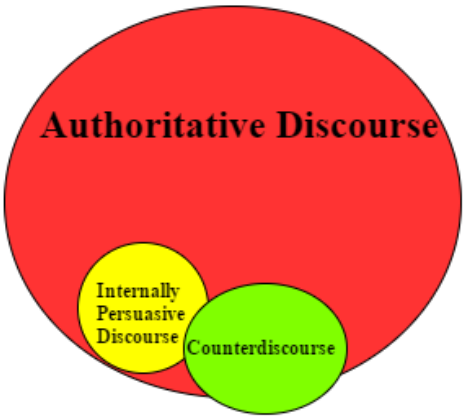

Figure 9: Counter-discourse

The above diagrams represent a snapshot of the discourses encountered in this study. The red areas of the above diagrams represent authoritative discourse (e.g., "It's a Sink or Swim Environment") and the yellow areas represent internally persuasive discourse (e.g., "Being the Cool Student Teacher"). Green areas either represent counterdiscourse (e.g., "Be Personal, but Don't Take it Personally") or the area that had expanded (i.e., the arrow in Figure 6) as a result of the amplification of internally persuasive discourse (e.g., "Call and Response"). Both approaches seemed to result in a less dominant authoritative discourse.

Amplification seemed to cause an overlapping discursive space within internally persuasive discourse, yet nevertheless remained completely within the realm of authoritative discourse. Counter-discourse, in contrast, forced internally persuasive and authoritative discourse to share discursive space and thus may have reduced the influence of both. Parts of

this counter-discourse also seemed to exist independent of authoritative discourse. As the above diagrams show, amplification of internally persuasive discourses or counter-discursive approaches did not eliminate the authoritative or internally persuasive discourses, but instead, true to their palimpsestic nature, seemed to overlap and overwrite rather than erase.

Certainly the kinds of problems and concerns each participant brought with them influenced whether or not they created a counterdiscourse. Moreover, the internally persuasive discourses they evoked in response to authoritative discourses seemed to also influence the direction towards either amplification or counter-discursive methods. Internally persuasive discourses such as "Being the Cool Student Teacher" or "Liking the Way I Teach" may have resonated with Allison and Nicole, respectively, on a deeper level than did Katie's and Sarah's internally persuasive discourses of "These Kids Should Just Know This" and "It's a Battle Every Day." On a surface level, the first two discourses, when surfaced, are more suggestive of amplification whereas the latter two suggest a counterdiscourse.

To speak broadly, discourses did not exist independently of each other; a fact consistent with the post-intentional phenomenology that guided this study (see Chapter 3). Acting as an experiential filter, discourses seemed to work in concert with one another in ways that mimicked kaleidoscopic "shards of glass." I draw on Davies (1993) to explicate this metaphor. While her use of the kaleidoscope metaphor does not map on perfectly to the way I use it here, I found it a helpful heuristic to interpret the possible ways participants may have perceived discourse. In this study, the different kinds of discourse seemed

> like precious fragments of colored glass, each one to be treasured, mused over, polished, and placed next to other pieces in a pattern. Each piece of glass could be gazed at or looked through, so that the other bits took on a new hue. There seemed an infinite

> number of ways to order the pieces, each pattern making a different story, each piece looking different depending on what I placed next to it…[Imagine] putting all the pieces in a huge kaleidoscope…[to] turn them round and round and see with amazement each pattern as each jeweled moment fell into place in relation to other moments. There in one sense in which each…gives you one turn of the kaleidoscope. (Davies, 1993, p. 15)

Revisiting the experiences of participants with this kaleidoscope metaphor in mind may provide one more avenue for understanding the possible influence discourse plays in making sense of and acting upon uncertain moments.

In summary, this section described some of the larger trends concerning core reflection as a tool for addressing uncertainty. I also offered and described a few ways to interpret the ways in which discourse may influence the interpretation of uncertain moments. Additionally, I explored how core reflection may have added to this process of interpretation. Future research with core reflection and other methods of unearthing discourse may be able to tell us more about the usefulness and validity of these heuristics. For now, however, I turn my attention to some of the implications of this study.

Implications

In my estimation, this study points to a few important implications for teacher educators and the work they do with student teachers. The first is with respect to how student teachers view and act upon situations they perceive as problems. The second concerns some of what I will call the "unintended side effects" of core reflection. The third is with regards to the ways student teachers may use their core qualities to cope with uncertainty. In this section, I explore these three implications and put them into dialogue with the findings of this study.

I begin this discussion of implications by considering core reflection as one method of transforming the ways student teachers construct and respond to problems. Each participant in this study, at one time or another, experienced some level of fixation on the problems they encountered during student teaching. As Katie summarized:

> It was so hard to think about the ideal because I was so wrapped up in the problem situation—that moment when I stepped over to the ideal was the first time I thought about it [being different]. I had just threw my hands up. I can't deal with [the problem situation]. I didn't even try to deal with it. I didn't even want to think about that activity again. This was the first time I thought about making it positive.

The activity in question was one that had gone awry and one that Katie had little motivation to revisit, despite the fact that she admitted she still had been brooding over the failed activity a full week after it had occurred.

Additionally, as Katie pointed out, reflecting upon ideal situations proved challenging and this pattern was recurrent across all participants' experience of core reflection. Participants talked about the ways in which they wished their students or the context would change, without mentioning their own actions. In Chapter 7, I interpreted this behavior as a "looking out the window" stance, which DuFour (2004) called an "if only approach" which "bases hopes for improvement on others." Participants indicated they could achieve their ideal, "if only" their students would cooperate. As we spent more time with core reflection, we began to shift towards a "looking in the mirror" stance, which "focuses on conditions that lie within the [teacher's] influence" (p. 1).

Both of these phenomena suggest student teachers, left to their own devices, may be inclined to quickly move on from uncertain and emotionally laden problem situations rather than

revisit them and, thus, may be unable or unwilling to perceive different ways they could have acted to change problem situations for the better. This study has shown core reflection has a role to play a role in modifying this orientation.

Yet, a question may linger in the minds of teacher educators: Who should be tasked with implementing core reflection with student teachers? Scholars have pointed out how cooperating teachers tend to focus heavily on day-to-day practice and maintaining status quo in the classroom (see McIntyre et al., 1996) and university supervisors tend to be caught between taking an evaluative role and a taking an advisory role (Slick, 1997). In this study, I played neither of these roles. It seems quite possible that core reflection might have been experienced in different ways if I was conducting core reflection sessions while also taking an evaluative stance as a supervisor. Who conducts core reflection and what additional roles, if any, they take on during student teaching is a question teacher educators may want to ask themselves before considering its use. Additionally, the effects of the different kinds of roles a coach takes on and the impact these roles may have on core reflection may be worthy of future research.

Teacher educators may also wish to consider some possible unintended side effects of core reflection. One of these side effects may be related to the kinds of problems that student teachers choose to discuss during core reflection. Korthagen and Evelein (2015) stressed the importance of a participant choosing an authentic problem situation. To be authentic, a participant would need to feel the situation truly represents a problem. Korthagen and Evelein (2015) went on to argue that for core reflection to "work," a participant needs to be "present" with a problem situation and needs to be able to think, feel, and want something different. Yet, what if a teacher candidate fails to recognize problems or fixates on the "wrong" kinds of problems?

In this study, student teachers tended to reflect upon two kinds of interrelated problems: student engagement and classroom management. This pattern is not surprising because these sorts of issues are typically among the chief concerns of teacher candidates (McNally et al., 2005). Research suggests these concerns are certainly worthy areas of apprehension—after all, issues related to classroom management are frequently cited as a precursors to teacher stress and burnout (Lewis et al., 2005). Moreover, teachers that are stressed seem to induce stressful feelings among their students (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016) and, consequently, reducing the stress felt by teachers may, indirectly, help their students.

Yet, some argue an overemphasis on issues related to classroom control may be too narrow of a frame to place over teaching (Archinstein & Barrett, 2004). Problematizing teaching only in terms of control (or lack thereof) highlights how core reflection may be overly reliant on teacher perception of "successful" instruction. In other words, a teacher might sense they are "in flow" and misinterpret how students are receiving their instruction. For example, a teacher could be overly certain that "respectful behavior" and compliance are proxies for learning and thus may not choose to use core reflection as a means to interrogate these situations.

Additionally, even a teacher effective in controlling a classroom may run the risk of overlooking the ways larger social justice issues may be playing out in the classroom. I use Nicole's experience as one such example. Nicole's core quality of authority seemed to make classroom management a less arduous process for her. Her experience working with ESL students and her ESL cooperating teacher (Teresa Pomither), however, suggested a problem situation that could not be remedied with authority alone. Nicole seemed to struggle to understand Teresa's lack of involvement with her student teaching and characterized Teresa as

overly "complacent" in her teaching and interactions with students. Yet Nicole seemed to not perceive how this behavior may have affected her teaching (or Teresa's).

The tension between Nicole and Teresa finally surfaced during our last core reflection session. Nicole brought in a problem with one of her ESL students and a discussion of the obstacle in this situation revealed the root of her problem to be a lack of guidance from Teresa. Additionally, Teresa's lowered expectations of ESL students was also unearthed as an obstacle. During our final interview, I asked Nicole why she simply had not begun our session with the problem of Teresa and she confessed:

> I think I never really brought [the issues with Teresa] up because when I think of a problem situation I think of students and it being a part of my teaching. Which it all goes back to my teaching, but it's not something I would identify as a problem. So I always thought of it as something with the kids. And it never would have come up at Owl River [Elementary School] because I never had a problem with any of the instruction there. But yeah, [Teresa] is definitely a problem. *(Laughs.)* This is most definitely [the biggest problem at Page Middle School]. It's like an Eric [level of] problem.

Nicole's comparison to Eric (a student she routinely found challenging) surprised me. While she was at Owl River Elementary, Nicole and I discussed Eric on almost a weekly basis, but we had never discussed Teresa until the end of her student teaching at Page Middle School. Unfortunately, this point only became apparent during our final interview, which was far too late to adequately address it with core reflection.

Despite Nicole's struggles with Teresa, she still seemed to lean on her as a model for how to address uncertainty in the ESL classroom. Uncertain of how to relate to and teach her students, Nicole wrestled with Teresa's characterization of her middle school ESL students as

"like kindergarteners." Additionally, Teresa only stipulated that Nicole's lessons contain a minimal amount of components (speaking, reading, or writing) and Nicole questioned this approach. Yet, unwilling to "rock the boat," she adopted this minimalistic approach and was met with praise from Teresa when Nicole's lessons contained all three components. Nicole received little feedback outside of encouragement to continue using speaking, reading, or writing in her lessons. Absent much feedback and uncertain how best to engage her ESL students, Nicole was left to draw on the discourses available to her. For example, in Chapter 6, I described Nicole's confusion over a writing prompt on travel that "bombed' with her ESL students. During reflection on this problem situation, Nicole began to wonder, "if I'm thinking too much about what I would like" and thus initiated an interrogation of her preferences and the disconnect those preferences may have caused between her and her students. And, as I said in Chapter 6, core reflection seemed to play a role (as did my position as a coach) when it came to interrogating Nicole's assumptions.

As the above example suggests, core reflection may have a place in interrogating the kinds of larger systemic "deficit' discourses Nicole seemed to be drawing from during her work with ESL students. Her ESL cooperating teacher sanctioned these sorts of discourses by characterizing ESL students as "like kindergartners" and so, given this example of teaching, I am not surprised Nicole was more inclined to blame her students rather than reconsider her instructional choices. The literature suggests blaming students is not uncommon. In a study of the ways elementary teachers acting upon "deficit discourses," James (2012) found that teachers

> resisted adaptation to individual students' realities, in part, because those [deficit] notions "rang true" within the larger discursive context. They were affirmed in conversations

> with other faculty, administrators, in the school and district, thus there was little need to rethink them. (p. 171)

As it did with the teachers in James' study, it seemed deficit discourse may have been affirmed and handed down from Teresa to Nicole. Nicole's situation also points to the ways in which core reflection may be able to interrogate and counter the kinds of discourses that affirm "deficit notions" of students and thus may be worthy of consideration as one way to reflect upon systemic and social justice issues even when initial student teacher concerns may center upon lack of student control and "respectful behavior."

Teacher educators, however, must be sensitive to the ways core qualities may inadvertently lead student teachers to reinforce the very discourses teacher educators would wish to interrogate and counter. For example, my core reflection sessions with Katie revealed an internal obstacle of "unrealistic expectations." Katie chose to draw upon her core quality of empathy to ascertain appropriate expectations for her elementary students. Yet, I can envision a circumstance when a student teacher uses empathy to justify inaccurate beliefs about students, particularly if a teacher is assuming beliefs consistent with her own social location (e.g., race, class, gender, religion) rather than that of the social location of their students (Sleeter, 2008). In response, I wonder if calling on a teacher candidate to use a core quality of empathy requires self-awareness to know the difference between feelings and beliefs originating from students versus feelings and beliefs that originate from the teacher herself. Core reflection theory presumes empathy could be cited as a strength and, if so, a teacher who considers empathy a strength may need to parse the difference between the source of thoughts and feelings. For this reason, a coach practicing core reflection may consider helping a participant validate core qualities as actual strengths before suggesting actualization of them in the classroom.

Even validated core qualities, however, could turn problematic. For example, a core quality of authority, taken to an extreme, could result in a tyrannical teacher. As Chapter 6 discussed, Nicole worried about being "too authoritative" and sought to use flexibility and "being personable" as moderating core qualities. Drawing upon complementary qualities, as Nicole sometimes did, could ameliorate some of the drawbacks associated with overreliance on one quality, and the cases of Katie and Sarah seem to confirm this point. Encouraging participants to draw upon multiple qualities in any given situation seems to have its benefits and teacher educators using core reflection may want to take this possibility under advisement.

Allison, conversely, often chose to draw upon one quality (usually authenticity) as a means to address uncertainty and seemed to experience mixed results. As I explored in Chapter 4, Allison sought to incorporate her qualities with the strategies provided by her cooperating teacher, but did so without fully considering the compatibility between her ideals, the qualities she chose to bring these ideals into practice, and the strategies her cooperating teacher and supervisor suggested to her. As a result, Allison seemed to take a "tool box" approach to addressing the uncertainties of being evaluated by her cooperating teacher and supervisor (in addition to the uncertainties associated with engaging and relating to her students). Allison summarized the "tool box" approach as one where

> I put all [the things I'm told by my supervisor, my cooperating teacher, my professors, and core reflection] into a tool box and I pull from it the things that I think are relevant for myself and use it. So if I need a hammer then I can pull out a hammer kind of thing. If I have a foundation that's, "This is what I need to [have my students] learn and then how am I going to get there? Here's my hammer. Here's my enthusiasm and that's gonna

help me to execute this lesson." Or it's like, "Hmmm...what is it that I'm really lacking right now? Well I can use my enthusiasm to help me do this."

Allison's "toolbox" approach to uncertainty calls to mind Lemov's taxonomy, a series of "bite-sized" teaching moves intended to assist teachers in their practice (Green, 2010). The fact that Allison saw her core qualities as another kind of move, on the same level as some of the teaching tips advocated by her supervisors, partly explains the lack of consistency with which she brainstormed ideals during core reflection.

In contrast to helping teacher candidates learn "teaching moves," the current trend in teacher education is to move towards the teaching of "core practices" (see Dotger, 2015; McDonald et al., 2013). This shift could represent a more holistic approach that could be compatible with core qualities. Core qualities (e.g., flexibility, enthusiasm, and creativity) could represent the root of the core practice of leading, for example, a classroom discussion. Of course, each teacher candidate draws on their own core qualities and so teacher educators may want to ask teacher candidates to use core practices in ways congruent with their own core qualities.

Grounding core practices in the actualization of core qualities may assist student teachers in navigating the feelings of insecurity provoked by uncertain aspects of teaching. As many teacher educators have probably noticed, novice teachers commonly seek "tricks of the trade" as a means to ameliorate feelings of insecurity that stem from uncertainty. Yet these "tricks" are often decontextualized "teaching moves" that may or may not be appropriate for a particular student population. Additionally student teachers may also "download" moves from their cooperating teacher, even when those moves do not fit with the student teacher's mission for teaching (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012). Allison exemplified this "downloading" approach to

insecurity, though each participant experienced similar moments and feelings at one time or another. Each sought "tips" or "models" for how to work with disengaged students and, to varying degrees, seemed to look to core reflection as one avenue to address uncertain situations that may call for immediate action. Following core reflection, however, each participant expressed relief from insecurity because their core qualities gave them "something to go off of" when faced with uncertain moments.

The Case for Core Reflection

Student teaching represents an important and formative time in a teacher's professional career (Anspal, Eisenschmidt, & Lofstrom, 2012) and is often cited by new teachers as the most beneficial, authentic, and practical aspect of learning to teach (Adams & Krockover, 1997; Britzman, 1991; Farkas et al., 2001). Novice teachers are often tasked with considering many experiences and discourses that may form and inform their professional identities. One participant, Sarah, illustrates this evolution. During a core reflection session, she mentioned coming into student teaching ready to "change everyone's lives" for the better. Eventually, as she became socialized into teaching, she recognized this view was "rose-colored," even though this ideal was, in Sarah's estimation, informed by educational theories learned in teacher education courses. As Sarah's example and others show, the experience of student teaching, and the discourses which play a role in giving it meaning, have the potential to shape what new teachers consider real and possible. In this section, I take up these kinds of concerns as a way to make a final case for core reflection.

Teacher educators have long concerned themselves with finding ways to help teacher candidates "teach against the grain" of limiting discourses (see Cochran-Smith, 2004), particularly those that position their students at a deficit (see James, 2012). Often teacher

educators spend a great deal of time and energy preparing teacher candidates for the discursive realities of schooling only to find student teaching undoing much of what was taught in teacher education (Zeichner, 1981). Rozelle and Wilson's (2012) study of teacher candidates illustrated this phenomenon. They found the influence of field experience actually moved from the outermost layers of Korthagen and Vasalos' (2005) "Onion Model" (see Figure 1 below) towards the innermost. In other words, the environment of the field experience tended to dictate beliefs and identity and so any change provoked by teacher education was reversed by the environment of field experience. As Rozelle and Wilson (2012) went on to observe, "The practices in which one engages may shape or even drive what we believe, who we believe ourselves to be, or what we know [and this idea] stands in contrast to models of teacher education which use theory-to-action pedagogies" (p. 1204).

In contrast, core reflection, by asking a participant to reflect on lived teaching experiences, begins with practice rather than theory. A participant begins core reflection by reflecting upon problems she encountered in the classroom environment and the behaviors she displayed during these situations. Next, she talks about her ideal (which often is tied closely to the mission layer of the onion) and then work her way from the core (where core qualities reside) to the outermost layers, eventually arriving upon a new set of behaviors to employ in the classroom. Through this process, she may encounter and interrogate the discourses that inform her beliefs and may draw on theories she learned in teacher education when considering the relevant competencies to develop and employ in her teaching behavior.

Core reflection is able to consider both the personal and the structural because of its grounding in what Korthagen & Vasalos (2005) called the "Onion Model."

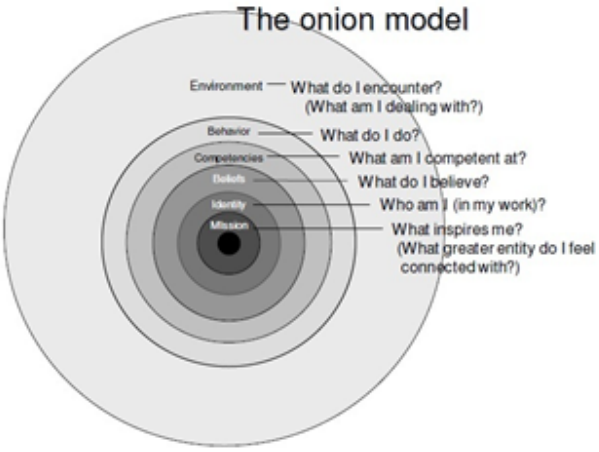

Figure 1: The Onion Model (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005)

By considering the interplay between the personal layers (e.g., mission and identity) and the structural (e.g., the environment), reflection upon the Onion Model allows for a holistic view of the processes that may inform teaching. This study suggests that the belief layer represents the axis upon which the personal and structural meet. Participants' beliefs often were informed by internally persuasive and authoritative discourses, both of which exemplified discursive structures commonly consulted during uncertain moments.

I contend one understudied aspect of reflecting upon the environment are the ways discourses, as a part of the environment, may influence the ways student teachers choose to act upon uncertainty. This study attempted to look more closely at the intersection of this discursive quality of the environment, the experience of core reflection, and the ways student teachers addressed uncertainty. Results of this study suggest some progress was made in expanding student teacher's beliefs beyond the confines of limiting discourses.

Concluding Thoughts

Two years ago my journey with core reflection began in a room full of teacher educators who were interested in learning a new way to aid teachers in reflecting upon their practice. I conclude this stage of my work with core reflection by looking ahead to what may be next for

those who wish to use core reflection. I will also draw to a close my work with Katie, Allison, Nicole, and Sarah by looking at what is on the horizon for these four teachers.

This study suggests two future directions of inquiry with respect to core reflection. The first is the impacts and outcomes of using core reflection as a tool for navigating the emotional drama of teaching, particularly for beginning teachers. All four participants in this study, at one time or another, mentioned prolonged brooding on interpersonal challenges related to students or their cooperating teachers. They also pointed to core reflection as one tool that helped them feel "calmer" and less "backed into a corner" with respect to the process of navigating uncertainty. In light of some of the causes of teacher attrition, such as feelings of "inconsequentiality" (Gold, 1999; Ingersol & Strong, 2011) and strained working relationships with students and colleagues (Johnson & Kardos, 2008), I wonder if implementing core reflection would have an effect on these strained relationships and feelings of "inconsequentiality." Additionally, as Intrator (2006), argued, "If our beginning teachers have no strategies for retaining their enthusiasm, rejuvenating their energy, bouncing back from the inevitable dark day, then our children will suffer. High impact teaching hinges on the presence, energy, and skills of the teacher" (p. 238). With this study of core reflection in mind, I wonder if core reflection may play a role in assisting beginning teachers with maintaining their presence and energy, if not also the skills needed for what Intrator called high impact teaching.

My work with Nicole in this study suggests a second potential avenue of future inquiry. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Nicole encountered and occasionally took up deficit discourses to make sense of the behavior of her ESL students during uncertain moments. These deficit discourses were informed partly by Nicole's cooperating teacher, but Nicole also seemed to lack a sense of herself as a cultured being when working with her ESL students. Sleeter

(2008) argued this lack of "sociocultural awareness" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) is a common issue for White preservice teachers of Nicole's social location. Without a sense of themselves as a cultured being, White preservice teachers may assume (as Nicole may have) that their own cultural lens represents the norm for all other students and, as a result, the disjuncture between perception and reality may lead to deficit views and lowered expectations for students of color (Sleeter, 2008). Casto (2010) extended this argument by offering that "deficit views and stereotypes about minority groups influence the initial judgments made by teachers about students…[and] such views…. must be interrogated before change can occur" (p. 203).

I saw this dynamic play out during a core reflection session that included a discussion over Nicole's frustration with the "disrespect" her ESL students showed towards her writing prompt on recreational travel. Nicole presumed a shared love of travel and this may have led her to assume that any student resistance was purely rooted in their disrespect of her and her teaching. While core reflection did not completely surface the cultural aspects of this deficit discourse, it did play a role in interrogating Nicole's beliefs and subsequently helped her realize her "worldview is not universal but is profoundly shaped by one's life experiences, as mediated by a variety of factors, chief among them race/ethnicity, social class, and gender" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 27). As Nicole's case suggests, it may be worthwhile to consider future studies that look at the application of core reflection as a tool for surfacing and addressing deficit discourses encountered by teachers working with diverse student populations.

In conclusion, as the case of Nicole and others in this study show, many teacher educators want student teachers to interrogate the discourses they use to make sense of their experiences. At the same time, however, this study suggests the merits of coaching preservice teachers to cope with the inevitable uncertainties of teaching. What I have found through my

work with these teacher candidates is that core reflection may be a tool with the potential to do both.

I finally want to leave the reader with a sense of what has happened to participants since this study concluded. Katie's journey in learning to teach, similar to many beginning teachers, was ongoing. She spent the summer looking for an elementary position near her hometown, but settled upon a Response to Intervention (RTI) position at the same school where she did her student teaching. Katie remained confident that she would find a full time teaching position in the coming year.

Following her "teach abroad" experience (which she characterized as "great"), Allison turned to the next stage of her teaching career: Teach for America (an alternative teacher certification program). This path took her to the east coast to teach music in an urban elementary school. After her Teach for America commitment, she planned to continue with education. One option Allison was considering was entry into a Master's degree program in education on the east coast.

Nicole and Sarah's journey following student teaching mirrored Allison and Katie's. As of this writing, Nicole was working as a Response to Intervention (RTI) aid at Page Middle School. Though she could not find a full time teaching position, she was optimistic she would teach fifth grade at Owl River next year because two of the fifth grade teachers had plans to retire after the academic year. Sarah, conversely, had accepted a position as an assistant band and orchestra director at a high school in a suburb of a large Midwestern city.

The paths that lie ahead of Katie, Allison, Nicole, and Sarah bring with them new uncertainties and possibilities—the first years of teaching often do. I can only hope that the time

they spent using core reflection brought them a greater sense of possibility as teachers while at the same time providing, as Sarah put it, “hindsight for the future.”

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Appendix

A Core Reflection Session with Katie

T - Okay, so it sounds like you already have something in mind.

K - Yeah.

T - So take us back there and try to be as concrete as you can. Tell us what you did. Tell us what happened with the students and how they reacted to what you were doing and just be as concrete as you can.

K - Okay. So the talking has been an issue with this class all along. It's been something that I'm not really sure how to deal with and I've heard from other teacher...I mean I myself have not had a class this talkative and I didn't know if that was just me being new or like not having not very many classes, maybe I got lucky. Um...I've heard from the other third grade teachers that this is just an overall problem. Well, so my supervisor came in to observe me and I'm doing this math lesson and we're working on subtraction. We've been working on estimating differences, so I thought a really fun way to practice the rounding skills, which they need, would be to do rounding scoot.

T - Okay. Mmhm.

K - So it's this game where, and the directions are very clear and very concise. You have a card. You have a chart, like a paper, that goes with you. The card stays on the desk. So every desk has a different card.

T - Okay.

K - The cards have a number. The kids start at whatever number is on their desk. On their grid. So say I'm number seventeen. I would have my little chard paper and I would start at the number seventeen on my grid. So then I would do the rounding because it says round to the nearest

tenth, round to the nearest thousand and it has a number. And you have round to whatever number it has. So it's not like it's hard directions. Then, when the teacher says scoot, I would pick up my paper and pencil and myself and scoot to the next desk. So then I would be at the next number. And then I would go to that number and I would round that number. So this was....awful. I get to trying to explain it -- they have a zillion questions. I'm trying to answer every question. Make sure it's as clear as possible, but I'm kind of feeling a little overwhelmed myself. I just feel very rushed and "They're not understanding. They're not understanding. Why aren't they understanding? Why are they not getting this? I don't understand." So many questions and then we're getting distracted from the whole point of the game. So then by the time we got to play the game, we had spent so much time on the directions -- everyone is just confused. All over again.

T - Oh no.

K - So people are not going to the desks that they were supposed to go to. The only way to do it in our classroom is to kind of do an S shape. So just kind of curves back around. So the last person goes to the first desk.

T - Oh, yeah.

K - So I was trying to direct people from the last desk. I don't know what happened. I'm saying scoot. It seems to be going okay. Kind of chaotic. Very noisy. Lots of desks moving. People bumping into things. People getting excited and giggling. Just a lot of white noise, right?

T - Mmhm.

K - So I'm kind of starting to get, "Oh my gosh, my supervisors watching." I'm getting very stressed. And they're getting louder and louder. And I'm like, "Okay, make sure you're going to the right place. Scoot!" And I'm making sure I'm doing my thing. And then suddenly kids are

bunching up at the back table because somehow the order's gotten off.

T - Oh.

K - It gets off one time. And then I'm trying to correct. I'm like, "Well we already had one person missing and so you're just gonna fill in and there's already a desk missing so you'll gonna go to there." I don't know what happened. But again, another person shows up and they have no desk to go to and I'm like, "What is going on? Why can you guys not sit and stay." I mean, "Follow along where you're supposed to be. Why can you not leave the card there? I'm not understanding what's going on right now." And everyone is getting really loud because they're like "Johnny's not supposed to be over there. Darren's not supposed to be over there. What's..." "You worry about you. Let me deal with this." They're all freaking out. It's getting louder and louder. And I'm just like, "Okay. Stop talking." And it's just like....come to find out later, my supervisor tells me, here I am thinking I'm totally stressed. Oh wait, I skipped ahead. Pause. Rewind. So, after that, I tried to correct it just by having them scoot the cards. They stayed stationary. The cards moved.

T - Okay.

K - Trying to fix it. That was kind of Marie's idea because she is like, "I don't know what's working." So she jumped up to try and help because it's getting so chaotic. And I think my blood pressure is rising because I was not every able to see straight. I'm so wrapped up in this moment. Just anxious and overwhelmed and, "Why is this not working? I planned this out and it's so straight forward. It seems to me to be so straight forward." They got it with a noun scoot. Same game; same rules. Nouns. They had to do plural or singular. Could do it fine. No one got out of order. Rounding? Oh man. Watch out. The whole thing was flying off the handle. And so they were trying to pass...this is not working. And I was just like, "Everyone. Stop. Just put

your paper and pencils down." I was really disappointed that we couldn't do this game. I was totally frustrated. Totally overwhelmed. And I was just like, "Boys and Girls. Stop Talking." And so I got really, like, kinda mad. But apparently my supervisor tells me that my voice did not reflect that I was disappointed in them. And that to me....it's come to me....Oh, that's not in the moment. That's not in the moment.

T - *(Laughs.)* Yeah, we'll talk about that in a bit. For now just take us from the start, to the middle, and then get to the end. So you said, "Stop boys and girls. Put all your stuff down." Then what happened?

K - Then I did tell them: "This is really disappointing but we're gonna have to put this game away because we can't handle it." So I went around and collected each of the cards. And handed them the worksheet that they were gonna do at the end to work on estimating. To use the skill we playing a game with. They just did the worksheet. And I walked around and helped people. And just kind of circulated. And so once that happened it was still...there was a little bit of talking, but nothing compared to the chaos of the game.

T - Yeah. So did they do okay on the worksheet then? Or were they struggling? How did the aftermath of the game play out?

K - They did pretty well actually. They got it when it came to actually rounding the numbers. I don't know what the difference was between rounding it on a card and the thing is, the difference is the grid. It's a grid and it's maybe overwhelming, but it's the same thing as the nouns. So the same exact grid they've used, they just put a different type of answer in.

T - Yeah.

K - So it was language arts instead of math.

T - So it wasn't a total wash. They did seem to learn something from it. Or at least they didn't

lose anything.

K - I don't think they gained anything. We had been working on rounding. They had been rounding to the nearest ten yesterday. This was just rounding to greater numbers. So they did well with it. There was a select few who have always been...they struggle with every single math lesson and so I kind of pull them out when I'm assessing how the group did. And then I assess what they did separately. Just because it's always the same exact people who are struggling. And so I'm always giving them extra help and trying to work them in in other ways. [9:00]

T - So I see the whole sequence now. So what would you say is the beginning of it going off the rails in terms of your vision of how it ought to have been? Was it when you were explaining it?

K - Yeah. I was explaining it and I could feel myself losing their concentration as I answered all these ridiculous [emphasis] questions.

T - Uh-huh.

K - And the questions were like the littlest things and so I think that's why I was getting kind of stressed because I was like, “Why are you even asking this? This is like common sense to me.” And I...that sounds horrible, but it was throwing off. I'm sure that's what was going through the minds of all the kids who weren't struggling with that. They were just like “What's going on? Why are we listening to this? This is a waste of time."

T - Yeah. So you're already telling me some of the things you're thinking about. That initial...so it sounds like there's three main parts to this, and they're all related, there's the first part where you're giving the directions and you're starting to tense up. And then they're doing the activity and you're trying to put out first and it's still not going very well. And they're bunching up. And then you have them pass the cards and that didn't work either. And then you're like “Just Stop.

This is over." So that's the beginning. The middle. The end. That's how I see the sequence. So looking at it like that - what are your thoughts about it? Imaging yourself back into the beginning, the middle, and the end. What are some of the things you're thinking about as that is transpiring?

K - Okay. Well to be completely honest I was thinking...one thing I know was on my mind the whole time was "I'm being watched right now and graded on this." And I thought "here's a fun activity that will look really good. I'm implementing this really fun activity that the kids will love." And then I get all these ridiculous questions. Just like ridiculous. Like...I don't know. ...like "What happens if we get to card twenty-seen and then we have to go to card one. What do we do with these other four boxes?" "You cross them off." I don't know. That's not even ridiculous. In the moment it's just like....I can't even think of it now, but maybe I was just so tense. So wanting it to go right... Yeah, the word is tense. I was just very tense. I was just feeling like, "Why is this not working? Why are they asking all these questions? Like we've done this game before. It's not a new game." And the students who were asking the questions were not the ones who had not played the game before. No. Just one because the other one left. So only one was new and hadn't play this game before, but she didn't ask a single question. It was the ones who had already played it. Really? Why? You've already done it. Why are you struggling now? So I was just like a little...frustrated.

T - So your thoughts about it are: first of all - I'm being observed and I want it to go well. And it's starting to not go well. And then you're also thinking: why are they not getting this? They've done this before. This is not that complicated. They're asking me kind of silly questions and they shouldn't be because we've done this before. Are those the two main thoughts? Is there a third thought that I didn't catch?

K - It's like...again just the stress of never being able to get them managed.

T - Because you're thinking, “Oh here we go again.” They are chatting and not paying attention.

K - MmHm. I'm losing them again. *(Sighs.)*

T - Yeah. Okay.

K - I just sigh. Okay?

T - So that brings us to the feeling of frustration that you mentioned before. Tension. A little bit of stress.

K - Anxiety.

T - Anxiety. These are things I've heard you say. So that breath you took sounded like, “Oh here we go again” kind of thing.

K - MmHmm.

T - Are there other feelings that you were having during the problem scenario?

K - I guess when I say anxiety I kind of mean fear that it's not going to go well. I guess I kind of had...I don't know. I don't know if I had a negative attitude going into it. I think I had a good attitude going into it. I think I was excited because they had played the game before and I was like, “Here's a fun thing we can do that they've done before that they'll love.” And then when they ask me all these questions it’s kind of like bringing me down. Like weights on my shoulders.

T - Yeah.

K – Like, “Oh. But this is not going how I expected.”

T - So the minute they ask all these questions—questions that you think should be pretty easy to figure out on their own. They shouldn't need to ask you it. Your thoughts during that were like, “Oh. Uh oh—this isn't going as well as I thought it was going to go.”

K - *(Nods.)*

T - So you're nodding your head yes. So that's what you were thinking. And then maybe you're thinking then: "This is not going to go well the rest of the activity?" Or were you still optimistic? Was that when your insecurity started to come in?

K - Yeah. And I was like, "Oh my god. How are we gonna get to the rest of this lesson? This is the easy part."

T - So it took you a long time to get to the point where you are like, "Alright. I think they're ready to start doing this now." But then you look at the clock or you somehow have a sense that, "This has been a long time." So you were thinking then what?

K - I think my heart rate just started going up. I was like, "Oh my gosh. We should already be playing. Why are we not playing this game yet? Why have we not started? What is going on? Why is this taking so long? Why are they asking so so many questions? What should I do now?" Just like question marks everywhere.

T - So you're feeling a little insecure at that point. Okay. So are there different feelings at different parts? Because we have focused on the beginning part. And then we have the middle part where they kind of bunching up and you're still trying to manage it.

K - Still stress. Still tension. A little bit of frustration. But a little bit less than the question part because it's like, "Oh well they are moving. They're moving desks. Maybe they forgot which way they go because they're just thinking so fast about the scooting. So I was a little bit more understanding then the beginning. But I was still getting...not as much upset with them, but upset with the situation. I wasn't as much frustrated that they should be getting this. Well, maybe a little bit. But less than at the beginning when they were asking me all these questions

that seemed very obvious. And I just felt very pressed for time and like judged. And like this is not turning out fun like it should have been.

[17:10]

T - Yeah, so the judged part is that insecurity that's the feeling that you're having?

K - *(Nods).*

T - Yeah. And the pressed for time....tension perhaps? Your thoughts are like, "We need to get done with this."

K - I guess fear of failing.

T - Yeah, that's the insecurity thing. You're like, "I wanna do a really good job, but I'm being observed and it's not going well. Oh no!" *(Laughs.)*

K - Yeah.

T - And then there is the end where Marie comes in and says, "Well if they pass them around." So they tried that. And so now you're seeing that happen. What are your thoughts and feelings on/

K - /they still are just like...I was physically taking cards from the last person and moving it to the first person. And then they're just like, "What do I do with this card!?"

T - *(Laughs.)* Yeah.

K - "You got one from this desk. That means yours goes to this desk. It just moves along. I don't understand why this is so hard." At that point, I was just infuriated because now I just look horrible and you guys are not doing what you should be doing. You're not doing how you normally do things. You're way worse than normal. Just noisy. And out of control. And I don't know if something is in the air because they were all just...so...hyped up. The tension in the room was just really high. Everyone was asking questions. Maybe they felt my tension. I don't

know.

T - Yeah, maybe.

K - It was just crazy. Everything just went...awful.

T - So it was building up building up building up and finally your frustration, anger, whatever your emotions were at the time...because that sounds like the two main ones at that time. It was boiling over. And you were just like "Alright. Stop. This isn't going to work anymore. Just pencils and paper down." So that was the end. So at the very end, were you still sort of feeling angry and frustrated or was there a change in feelings and thoughts at the very end when they were switching to something else.

K - I was still mad. I was really mad. Because I was just upset. I felt bad about myself that I couldn't do it. I felt like I had failed. I felt like...I felt mad that they were not focused. It felt like they weren't trying. I wasn't sure if that was the case or if it was my anger plus all of whatever was going on. Not tension in the room, but energy. I was just mad and upset and I felt bad about myself as a teacher and I felt embarrassed that this had happened when my supervisor is watching me. I felt like, "What a disappointment that half these kids don't even care." Some of them were disappointed. Some of them were just like, "Meh. Whatever."

T - I'm thinking that it sounds to me like—and I kind of feel this as you were describing it. There is a smaller snowball at the beginning that I'm gonna say these are the directions: Here's what they need to know and they're not getting it. Something's wrong. And the snowball's getting bigger and bigger all the way to the end. So the original snowball, I think, is the problem scenario we want to focus on because it sounds like after walking through the beginning, the middle, and the end -- they sound all related to each other. It's just bigger every time. Does that feel correct/

K - /Yes. Yeah. Exactly/

T -/wanted to make sure I wasn't just imagining that/

K - /I lost control at the end. Even my emotions. I just felt not in control of my emotions. I did bounce back pretty quickly. Once we weren't doing that activity and they put it away and they were going this other activity. I was able to help them and be positive and be like, “Okay, you're trying.” Yeah, it's like going up a hill or I guess down a hill. The crash.

T - Either way. You're moving the snowball up the hill and then you get to the top of the hill and you're just like, “Okay, that's it, just put it away.” And it's like you're pushing the snowball off the hill and now it's gone. And you're just like, “Alright, well now we're just doing something different.”

K - Yeah.

T - It sounds like you were quick to go, “Okay, well that just failed.” And moved on to the next thing and were able to get your teacher presence back then.

K -Yeah.

T - It sounds like there is this clear boundary where this is a new thing where you are working with them one-on-one after. But it is—it feels like you're pulling it up this hill. Like you're, “Oh, I'm trying to get it there.” And then eventually, “No.” And it just rolls down. But the snowballs getting bigger and bigger as you get more tension and eventually you throw the thing over because it's not gonna happen. So I think we've really got a clear sense of the problem here.

K - Yes.

[23:16]

T - So what is it that you want? What would the ideal be? Starting with the initial part of they're asking these questions and you are you initially describing the lesson - maybe it's even before

that, but we'll start with that initial sort of like “Okay, class here is what we are going to do today.” And then what would the ideal look like from then on? So we'll walk you over to the ideal.

K - Okay, so. Trying to get rid of that (points to problem situation). In the ideal...I come in and I tell them what we are going to do. I'm explaining the directions. Everyone's eyes are off their papers. They're actually focused on me. They're paying attention so they will know what to do. When I explain what the numbers mean, where your card matches, they will nod so that I know they are with me. And then when they do have those questions, I feel like, I only answer it once. One person has one question and I answer it. And then the other people are listening enough that they don't answer the exact same question. So instead of having 15 questions, I have 5 questions. And then we can immediately get into the game. And then I can pause the game to be like, “Okay, is everybody with me?” But I felt like I didn't even have a chance to do that because I was feeling so rushed on time, but in the ideal, I would get it going and then stop and check and make sure everyone is with me and then get it going again. So just a more relaxed version. And then they can still have fun and I would love for them to be excited and be with me and be excited to move to next card. I would love to see the excited energy. Like the happy energy. Not this...chaotic energy of like...what's going on? Where do I go? What do I do? I don't know anything because I wasn't listening because I forgot because so and so spent so much time asking me five questions about the same thing.

T - Yeah. So just to arrive back to the very beginning because I think that's where the beginning of the snowball started and we want to keep the snowball more manageable at the beginning - just be really specific about what you're going to do. You said that they would be paying attention, but what specifically would you be doing? Would it be any different from what you

were doing in the problem scenario? Because when you were doing the problem scenario you just said told them verbally that's what you were going to do? In your ideal scenario, would you do that same thing?

K - No. In the ideal I would probably have more enthusiasm. And I would use this technique that I used in my gym class actually where I would have a couple students demonstrate what we are doing -- that just came to me.

T - Okay.

K - That would be something that might work to get them to pay attention and so that they know the rules. What to do. I still don't know what to do about the where to go, but that's not the beginning. But I would do a demonstration with a couple students. First. I feel like that would help. All of them would want to see what they're classmates are doing rather than what I'm doing.

T - Yeah, sure.

K - So I just, again, the ideal would have them listening, paying attention, following along, being engaged. Just even their body language would be engaged rather than just slumped over. Or staring off at the wall or the clock, whatever they were doing before. Their body language would be telling me that they're ready to go.

T - That would be great if that happened and also that there are things that you as a teacher do that can help inspire "Oh, what's happening here?" So I think the demonstration idea—a drowsy student might benefit from having you walk them through it. It seems like a good exercise that allows you to use your creativity and enthusiasm as you work with a student. And maybe they perk up at the same time as you're doing that. And as I see your ideal, you are saying, this is what I want my students to be doing. They would be doing that partly in response to what you're

doing with students as you're walking them through it. So then what happens?

K - Then I would probably ask if there any questions, still, because I wouldn't want to start off with a ton of questions. I would still limit the questions and say, “I'm gonna answer three questions. So if anyone has any questions I can only answer three so make sure you're paying attention to what questions are asked.” Just phrase it in a way that would help them realize, “Wait, if my questions not asked then I'm not gonna know.” I don't know, kind of keep them on their toes. And then after doing a round, I would check and see if are people with me. And if there are questions, then answer three more. Unless there's a ton of hands. Then I would try a different....I don't know.

T - That's okay. I think we are getting into solution thinking, so let's try to just focus on what you're seeing yourself do. It's hard to separate the two, I realize, where you're like, “I wanna see myself doing something, but I can't know what to do unless I know what the solution is.” But try to picture your qualities. The first couple things that happened, you talked to them about what happened. You demonstrated it. And you're like “I'm gonna take three questions.” And then we're gonna do this. Just looking at that part there. What sort of qualities are coming out in you during that? ....well actually...wait, I'm gonna interrupt you. I skipped a step. Just that part there -- what are you thinking as that part is going on? [The part when you say] “I told you what is going on. I showed you what is going on. And then I'm gonna take three questions.” Is that a good summary of your ideal?

K - Yeah.

T - What are you thinking as you are picturing that.

K - What am I thinking if I'm in the ideal?

T - Yeah, so you're standing in it right now. You seeing it in your mind. What is going through

your mind. Up to the point where you let them go—don't picture them doing it yet. Just picture that first smaller snowball.

[32:05]

T - So you're seeing yourself in the ideal. You're seeing your qualities coming out. What are you thinking as that happens?

K - Feeling excited that they are working. Feeling happy that I can use my empathy to make my lesson better. So not only are they with me, but I'm with them. Like before when I saw blank faces, that's when I started to get stressed. But instead of letting that stress overpower, maybe just like managing it—like that whole three questions thing. So I'd feel....I don't know...I forget where I was.

T - I asked you what you were thinking about the qualities and you're also telling me what you feel about them, which is fine. You weave them together so often, and that's fine, but we want to make sure we get them both articulated. So you're feeling/

K - /well/

T - /go ahead and tell me what you're thinking about them.

K - ...uh?

T - Do they sound like qualities you actually have and are implementing?

K - Yes. Yes, I think I can do that. I'm a little confused as to what you're asking when you say "What I think about my qualities." Do I like them?

T - Uh...well, usually what people say is, "Yeah, I think that sounds like me." or "Uh, nah, maybe they're not quite what I see happening in the ideal." So when I ask that, it's sort of you getting a sense as to whether: "Are these me or is Tom just telling me what my qualities are because in this ideal it's something else, but I'm not sure what it is yet." So when I ask what you

think about it—really think about whether or not they fit in with what your ideal is and make sure that I'm not just telling you qualities that are not your qualities.

K - Okay, I'm with you now.

T - So that's what I mean by that.

K - So yes. I do think I said those. And I was kind of thinking when you were saying it: "He's taking the words right out of my mind."

T - Okay.

K - So I was just thinking it was definitely a leadership thing. I do feel like, it's not something I take on a lot, but I feel like in my ideal, it's something I want to take on. And so I feel like I could if I look at it as going in as a team captain. Going in something like that—"I'm gonna lead you through this," like you said. That's something I feel like I can do. And then empathy—it's a blessing and a curse, but it's always with me. But I have that one and I feel like it comes out all the time, whether I want it to or not. So I think it would definitely benefit me in my ideal. It would help me make sure they're with me and I'm with them. My enthusiasm—I think I can definitely get on board with getting them, not riled up, because I don't want them to go crazy, but I do want them to be wanting to play the game. Excited about the game. Excited to use their minds to do a new scoot. They love that game. They get excited about it. Just hearing the name. So seeing that, I think I could really work that enthusiasm and get them geared up. And creativity… No, I don't remember.

T - That was in there kind of, but it was sort before the/

K - /it was during the demonstration. I think I can definitely make that demonstration and show them what to do. And I've done that before. It's just kind of on the backburner and I just dusted off the cobwebs. But I think that is something that I really like is doing the demonstration a little

bit rather than doing all of the explanation at the beginning and then having them forget half the rules by the time they get going. Maybe having them kind of work through it and learn it as they play it.

[41:15]

T - So I think I've gotten a little turned around when you said “have them learn it as they play it.” Can you say more about what you mean by that?

K - Okay. Well, like with the demonstration, just instead of giving them here's every single rule/

T - /Okay, I think I'm starting to see what you're talking about/

K - /I would have them, I would be like, “Okay, here's what you do.” I'd show them rather than tell them. Like by having a student actually demonstrate it I would have the student walk through it. And they could see it. And that's what I mean when I say we would do a couple rounds and then stop and then make sure everyone is on par. So rather than teaching all of it and then having to actually play the game. We would play the game, learning it as we go.

T - Okay, so I guess I was a little confused about...you're having them do the demonstration, so I wasn't sure if you were having them learn during the demonstration by saying like, “Okay, you come up here and you just do it right now.” And then they're like, “I'm not sure what to do next.” And then you're like, “Okay class what should he do next?” And then/

K - /Oh. No/

T - /I wasn't sure if you were saying that is what they were doing or if the demonstration was actually all of them playing the game and doing a round, one round. And then stop them and say “Ok, how did it go?"

K - Yeah. Yeah.

T - Okay, so that's what you're talking about. I just wanted to make sure I understood you. So

you walked us through the qualities and what you think about them - so how do you feel about those qualities? You kind of did this already, but I just want to get us back in touch with them.

K - Okay, I feel good. I feel...man, this is hard...

T - So imagine you're doing these - you're having the leadership and you're using your creativity and your enthusiasm.

K - I'd be excited. I feel like this is going well. This is why I want to teach. I'd feel happy that they'd be happy. I'd feel empathetic - and that'd be a good thing hopefully. If it's going well it'd be a really good thing. It'd be "Oh my gosh, they're so excited, so I'm so excited." And they're getting it and they're using this skill. I'd be proud and happy that they're understanding it and and it's clicking. It's flowing. And we're getting that flow going. And I'd feel like - joyful.

T - I can feel that you're getting some presence inside this ideal.

K - Okay.

T - So now that you're really seeing yourself in it—is this what you want?

K - Yeah. Yeah.

T - So this brings us to the question: What is keeping this from happening? So what is the obstacle? What has caught you and pulled you over here (points to problem situation) instead of taking you towards the ideal that you want?

[44:25]

K - Um, I think it's that fear, again, of being watched. I hate it. I hate the idea of being graded on my teaching. Which I know has to happen. It makes sense to me. It's not something I disagree with by any means. It's just something that stresses me out. So I get very tense. It's that fear and anxiety that's kind of holding me back from thinking as clearly about planning it. I'm not using my creativity as much because, again this is an external obstacle, but time. I'm just

so over-extended and I feel like—like I'm just doing what I can. The extra things, like putting in the extra emphasis—like I plan a very…like he said on there…it was a thoughtful lesson. It was just actually doing it didn't go. It didn't match. So I think like I get so tense and like we said, I freeze. And I think that freezing stopped me from thinking on my feet and kind of "It's not going well, what I can do?" I didn't backtrack. I just stormed through like a bull in a china shop. Like you said, the snowball just kept getting bigger. I froze in a way that I didn't know what to do. So then I revert....

T - Default?

K - Yeah, defaulted back to that what I think a teacher should be. Because I have these expectations which I think are an obstacle. These expectations of what I think I should be doing. What I think other people think I should be doing. What other people think of me. My fear of that.

T - Yeah, the fear is never an obstacle. It's more of an emotion. It's more like "I'm afraid. Thank you for the information, fear. Now what am I going to do." It's okay, it's an emotion. But certainly the belief that...the associated belief that is "I'm afraid I'm going to be marked down." or "I'm afraid I'm not a good teacher so I get insecure." Something like that -- the emotion is an effect of the belief you have -- it's never the obstacle itself. So a belief like "I'm worried I'm gonna be marked down." I guess that's still a fear...

K - I think I'm gonna be marked down.

T - Yeah. Or I think this isn't going well. Oh no, it's not going well. Oh no, I'm not gonna get a good grade on my evaluation. Then fear happens. Then you freeze. And then you default to "I'm just gonna push through this because that's what a good teacher would do." So what do you think about that? Am I articulating the internal obstacle, which is a belief you have about

yourself? The thing that's causing you to freeze up.

K - Yeah.

T - Part of it is me drawing on things we've talked about before so I'm not totally making that up. What do you think about that sort of...it was that big thing you said at the end of one of our other core reflections: "What if I'm not just cut out to be this? What if I just don't have the authority or the leadership or something like that?" And I was like, "That's a big belief -- bigger than we can get into now," but I think it's still similar to what's happening here.

K - Yeah, I think it stops me a lot.

T - What do you think about that? Actually let's articulate it first. What was it again? Is it really that recurring thought that you had before? Is that still what is happening? Is that what happened when you froze? Or is it soon as you walk in and see the supervisor there?

K - I think maybe it is. I see this supervisor and I'm so...I guess I worry because....I don't know if I....that's so hard....I feel like I have all these qualities and I have all these strengths and I have so much drive to do this and I don't know why I cut myself down. Like, "Oh he's not gonna think I'm good." Or "she's not gonna think I'm good." Like my supervisor is gonna knock me down. And I am really OCD about that. I have to please people and I have to get these grades and if I don't then...I don't know... I just trap myself in that. I don't know.

T - Yeah. It's recurring and it's probably very old. It was probably around way before you ever got to student teaching. The question that I wanna try to get answer is: Is that really what is keeping you from having these core qualities come out? When you see the supervisor you think: "Oh no, I'm not good and they're gonna find out I'm not good. They're watching me." Or is there some other thought that's keeping the qualities from coming out.

K - I don't know. I think I have more confidence than that.

T - Yeah.

K - I'm not sure. Because I don't think. I don't go in there and think, “Oh, well I suck and he's finally gonna find out.”

T - Yeah, sure.

K - I don't think that. I think...I don't think I'm bad. I just think I'm not good enough. Yeah. That I'll never be the best.

T - Oh, okay. So you have a real high expectation for yourself?

K - Yes. Like I am always comparing myself to other people. I've even comparing myself to the other teachers and they've been teaching forever. And I'm a student teacher and I shouldn't ever do that. But what if I can never get there. I don't know. I think it's more where it comes in—not that I think I'm bad, because I don't think I'm bad, but I think I might not be good enough at times.

T - Yeah.

K - And that...I'm one of those people that gets to the point where, “Well if I'm not good enough, then what's the point?”

T - Oh. Okay. That's a big fall off right there: “Not good enough. Nah, what's the point? Don't even do it at all.” *(Laughs).*

K - *(Laughs.)* Whatever. *(Laughs.)*

T - “I'm not the best, so...screw this.” *(Laughs.)*

K - *(Laughs.)*

T - So it seems kind of laughable, but I can see how that could be a thought that you would have. It's kind of all or none. You want to be the best or let's just do something else. So when you froze and then you thought, “We're just gonna move ahead.” Even though, if you would have

been using your quality of empathy, you would have looked out at them and saw that they were confused and they were still gonna be confused when they do the activity. It won't change.

K - *(Laughs.)*

T - But you didn't use your empathy. Your resourcefulness. Your creativity to go "What can I do to explain this in another way because they don't understand?" But instead, you just send them out there hoping for the best.

K - *(Laughs.)*

T - Somehow they'll figure it out. So what stopped you from using this empathy that you have? We talk about it every single time. What stopped you from doing that here? You still had it but you didn't listen to it.

K - Because I knew they were confused. I don't know why I just pushed through.

T - Well you froze.

K - Yeah.

T - You were like, "I don't know what to do. They don't understand it. I'm freezing. I'm just gonna default to my vision of a good teacher—the best teacher would do this." They would be, "everything is fine. Stay the course. They're just gonna do it and I'm just gonna will them somehow to learn how to do this correctly." Even though they didn't know it when I gave them the initial instructions. So what stopped you from having that empathy? What was the thought that you had before you froze? [Was it] "They're not getting it—oh no."

K – "I can't do this." I think that's the thought that popped in my head. "I'm never gonna get them managed. It's never gonna work." That's a very negative thought and I tried to bounce back from it, but that's the probably the initial: "It's never gonna work, so whatever."

T – "Whatever, let's just have them do it. Just go do it."

K - That's awful. It's just so bad. I think that's just what happened when I froze. Just like "Arrrghh!" And I think it wasn't so much them, it was more me. [Telling myself:] "Why can't you get this? Why can you get them managed? Why is that not coming to you?" I think I get really mad about that.

T - So are you mad at yourself because you're not explaining it well enough that they can understand it? Why can't you manage them to get them to the point where they are all listening?

K - Yeah. That one. Not even that they don't understand it. I...okay. I think some of it is just on them. I don't know. Some of it. They've gotten it before. Sometimes I see them just check out—they're not even trying to understand it. And that's when I start to get mad. There's a couple of students who just zone out. And they just turn—they go from trying to suddenly being like, "What?" I get that a lot. There are a lot of students who ask me that. And it's just like, "Okay, you've turned off your thinking brain. This is just the 'I don't know what to do, I'm giving up.'" Which was kind of like what I was doing. But there is a couple students, and a couple names are coming to mind, who just give up. They're just like, "What? Well..." I'm distracted and...

[55:45]

T - So that's an external obstacle to yourself - that they just check out and they're not listening or they just give up or they're not quite as motivated as you want them to be. It's just another external obstacle to your teaching.

K - Yeah, and that's not really why I'm upset. It's more me not being about to manage it. To keep them focused.

T - To summarize the internal belief of "I can't keep them focused." What are you saying to yourself that summarizes what happens when you freeze?

K - I don't know, probably, “Here we go again. We're just never gonna get it right.”

T - Okay, that's what it is: “I'm never gonna get it right.”

K - Yeah. *(Sighs.)*

T - So what do you think about that thought? That you’re never gonna get it right.

K - I think it’s kind of ridiculous. And I kind of want to kick it out of my head. It’s just that it always happens. I want a perfect score. It’s awful, but I’m a perfectionist. And it drives me crazy that I can’t please everyone.

T - How do you feel about that?

K - Horrible. I don’t know how to kick that. I’m never gonna please everyone, so that’s always gonna be a losing battle. I don’t know why I do it.

T - We won’t focus so much on why, but it’s there, it’s an internal obstacle. It’s when you get dragged into it that it becomes a problem situation. Right now, you’re standing on the obstacle [placemat]. It’s white. It’s neutral. Here’s this internal obstacle that sometimes I think: “I’m never gonna get this right.” However way you phrase it. Is this something that you want though?

K - *(Shakes head no).*

T - So how can we bring in these qualities? Because I don’t want you to get sucked into this, “I’m never gonna get anything right” thought.

K - I don’t know. Maybe putting more planning and just again time is an obstacle. So it’s hard to get by. There’s only so much I can handle because at some point I do crash.

T - Sometimes you just gotta go, “Okay, it’s 11 at night I need to go to sleep. And I’m gonna wake up tomorrow and do the best I can.”

K - Mmhm.

T - It's when you choose to go: "Okay I'm having a problem here or I'm encountering an obstacle of they're not getting it, but then you hear this voice, from somewhere, it's the voice that's like, 'I'm never gonna get this right.'" You can listen to the voice or you can go, "Okay, voice, I hear you, but I'm not gonna listen to you, I'm gonna bring in my qualities."

K - I'm gonna use my empathy to pull out—where did that come from? Why did I not ever think of the demonstrating as I teach? I would pull up those students. I would pull up Caleb and Becca who are giving me that "What?" look. And I would have them walk through it. As the classes watches. As the class if following along. And I would use that...I can just feel myself putting on the ignore on that thought and just thinking "I'm doing the best I can." And then sometimes if you fake your excitement then, like you said, I've brought this up before, but then it starts to grow into real excitement because I know they're excited.

T - So you have a choice when you encounter the obstacle—because what happened, I think, is that you didn't get the response you expected from them and then you quickly heard the voice that said, "I'm never gonna get this right." And then you froze and then the problem situation happened. And then you were like let's just do this and get it done because that's what a good teacher would do. So you defaulted to this abstract teacher and what they would do, rather than following your qualities. So next time, see if there's some way, when you encounter that to just really get yourself present, take a breath, whatever, get yourself centered, and go, "What are my qualities and how can I use them?" Because you can't plan everything. You could go, "I'm just never gonna sleep. I'm gonna plan every little minute."

K - *(Laughs.)* No way. *(Laughs.)*

T - And then you'll be so tired that you won't be able to do it. You'll just crash. So it's just a matter of finding a way to be present enough to hear the voice and imagine you're outside and

you're seeing this and you're like, "Okay, the obstacle is coming up that says, 'I'm never gonna get this right.' And you're like, 'All right, I hear ya and it's just voices. I don't know where they came from, but they're there." And I'm gonna choose to listen to and follow my qualities and not listen to this voice that's just there. It can be real big or it can be real small. It got bigger because of the snowball got bigger and bigger and the voice is getting bigger: "You're never gonna get this right." The idea is to catch it while the snowball is still small—to go, "All right, I see you the person that says, 'I'm never gonna get this right' and I'm gonna go over here (points to core qualities placemat) and get my empathy and say, "What's going on with them? They're not getting this. I'm not gonna put them out there and have them work on this if they don't get this now. What can I do to help them get it before they do the activity?" So what do you think about that?

K - I think that sounds plausible. Something I can do. And I think I need to keep that in mind because shutting down obviously never works and throwing them out there when I know they're not getting it. That's not gonna work. But finding a way to ignore that and not give into the fear of "Well he's gonna be mad if I don't do the exact lesson I had planned." Just kind of deviating if I have to.

T - Oh. Okay that was a thought that we didn't encounter before. You have this lesson plan and you have to stick to the lesson plan that I gave the supervisor because if I don't then it will look like I don't know what I'm doing up here. So that's a separate thing that you want to think about: "Do I have the wiggle room to be creative? Why don't I think I do?" Yeah, that's not something that will normally happen probably. A principal might want to see your lesson, but I think they would rather you deviate rather than staying the course and let this thing totally crash and burn, fully.

K - *(Laughs.)*

T - Rather than saying, “Okay, let’s make an adjustment here instead of going right into something that’s not working from the outset.” But yeah, I’m glad you brought that up because that’s definitely something worth considering because there are associated thoughts that tell you what you can or cannot do. Anyways, I’m taking us off the ideal here. So...

K - *(Laughs.)* You’re fine.

T - So what do you feel about this new ideal?

K - I feel excited. I feel like I can do it.

T - Is this something you want to happen?

K - Yeah. I do.

[1:05:14]

T - So I know we are getting a little over on time, but real quick just to make sure you’re feeling solid in this. So just imagine you’re doing it - you walk into the class. What do you do first?

K - So I walk in and I go, “Okay guys, we're gonna play a really fun game. You guys already know it, but we're gonna put another little fun spin on it” and I'd say “We are actually gonna play the game 'Scoot,' but we're gonna play it with rounding.” And I would be more enthusiastic and loud, of course. Then I would say, “Can I have two volunteers? I need two (emphasis) volunteers.”

T - And I'm sure the kids are excited and they all run up there and they’re like, “Yeah, let's do this!"

K - And then I'd probably call on the two that are the least excited and they would come up and I would kind of have them demonstrate to the rest of the class what we are doing. And I would explain each step as they move. I'd tell them what to do.

T - So what if the students are still kind of loud or they're not paying attention during the demonstration?

K - I think in that case I would probably stop. Wait for them a little bit and then I would get my stern voice out, just a little, and I would probably be, “Boys and girls, you need to listen. This is important. We're not gonna be able to play this fun game if you guys can't keep it under control.”

T - So then the students are like, “Okay, okay, we're gonna listen now.” So then you're doing the demonstration and then what happens after you've done the demonstration?

K - After I've done the demonstration, then I would send those two back to their seats and I'd say “Okay, everyone look at your card, what number are you on?” And I would have them tell me. And I feel like I should set up something like an arrow of some sort just to show them, like if you're in a race when it says, “If you're here, go this way.” Even if it's just a piece of construction paper that shows an arrow pointing. Just to show them which desk to go to and then they would have it at the other end so it's kind of like a slide or a game. And we would do a round and I would say, “Stop. Everyone freeze. How did that go? Give me a ‘thumbs up’ if it went really well and you know exactly what you're supposed to do. ‘Thumbs down’ if you're totally confused and have no idea where you should be or what you should be doing. And a ‘thumbs in the middle’ if you're kind of so-so.” And I would kind of gauge how many thumbs are in which direction.

T - So let's say half of them are kind of “thumbs middle” or “thumbs down.” What then?

K - I would have a couple of the “thumbs up” people come up and demonstrate what they think it should be. Just pick two people who give the “thumbs up” and I would have them come up and show and see if having them explain it in a different way helps. So we'd do another round and

I'd pause and then hopefully there would be more “thumbs up” [next time] and I'd be like, okay, now who ever has a “thumbs down” I can go stand by as we play. Just to kind of make sure they are on task. So I can be like “Okay, now you need to do this and this and now scoot right here.” So I'd kind of stick with whoever's really struggling.

T - I see the empathy because you see this person's struggling and you want to help and you're gonna work with them and get them sort of straightened out so they'll see those two coming out. And then I saw, in action, the creativity, because I was like “We didn't talk about that” where you're like “I'll just take the two with the ‘thumbs up’ and I'll have them show it.” And boom, right there -- creativity came out.

K - Boom! *(Laughs.)*

T - So you can do it!

K - I can. I can.

T - You just gotta not listen to the…

K - …obstacle.

T - And you were doing it here when I asked you - the creativity just came out of nowhere.

K - I was kind of feeling like, “I don't know what to do,” but then I was “No. You're gonna get caught"

T - Okay, cool, well I don’t know if you’ll have another opportunity to try this with the game, but if you do...

K - Well we are playing Jeopardy on Friday so hopefully I can use some of these skills. I’m a little nervous about that game. I have tomorrow luckily to work on it.

T - Yeah. So definitely use your creativity and empathy when you’re doing your Jeopardy.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

- Ph.D., Curriculum Studies, June 2017, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
- M.S., Educational Leadership, August 2012, Indiana University, Indianapolis, IN
- B.A., Biological Sciences, May 2004, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

DISSERTATION

Beyond Downloaded Routines: Core Reflection as a Tool for Addressing Uncertainty
Director: Robert Kunzman
Committee Members: Barbara Dennis, Kathryn Engebretson, Terry Mason

Drawing on positive and gestalt psychological frameworks, core reflection aims to empower teachers and students through a guided analysis of assets, obstacles, and ideals while also asking teacher candidates to reflect upon thoughts, feelings, and desires about their practice. In light of these intended outcomes, this dissertation explores the research question: How do student teachers experience core reflection? What I found was that student teachers experienced core reflection as a method to move beyond "downloading"—taking action without awareness—during moments of uncertainty. Additionally, student teachers seemed to use core reflection as a means to uncover, interrogate, and re-write the discourses they previously enacted during moments of uncertainty.

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS

2016 to 2017	**Associate Instructor** of the Teaching in a Pluralistic Society course (E/M300), School of Education, Indiana University, Bloomington
2012 to 2016	**Associate Instructor** of the Community of Teachers program in Secondary Education (S400/S500), School of Education, Indiana University, Bloomington
Fall 2014/2015	**Associate Instructor** of the Teaching in a Pluralistic Society course (M300), School of Education, Indiana University, Bloomington

2011 to 2012 **Administrative Intern (Urban Principalship Program)** for Lawrence Central High School, Lawrence Township Schools, Indianapolis, IN

2006 to 2011 **Science Teacher** for Harris Academy, Brownsburg Community School Corporation, Brownsburg, IN

2004 to 2006 **Science Teacher** for Cooperative Achievement Program, Pike Township Schools, Indianapolis, IN

AWARDS & HONORS

2009 IPL Golden Apple Award (Indiana K-12 Teaching Award)
2016 Outstanding Associate Instructor Award (Nomination)

LICENSES/CERTIFICATES

2014 to 2019 State of Indiana Professional Educator's License (Biology/Chemistry)

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

My primary research interests relate to using critical qualitative methodology to explore the interplay between agency, structure, and identity with respect to teacher and teacher candidate motivation and sense of purpose.

GRANTS

Travel Grants

Indiana University Graduate Student Travel Grant

- **$500** for travel to Ashland, Oregon to present paper at the *Annual Holistic Teaching and Learning Conference*, 2014.
- **$450** for travel to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada to present paper at the *Annual Holistic Teaching and Learning Conference*, 2016.
- **$300** for travel to San Antonio, Texas to present paper at the *American Educational Research Association Conference*, 2017

PEER-REVIEWED PRESENTATIONS

Browning, T. D. (2014, September 20). Unwrapping the onion: A study of perceived mission and agency of student teachers. *Holistic Teaching and Learning Conference*, Ashland, OR.

Browning, T. D. (2015, February 27). "Teachers still do the whole boring lecture thing, should I be doing that all the time?": A study of the perceptions of mission and agency of student teachers. *Curriculum and Instruction Research and Creative Activity Symposium (CIRCAS)*, Bloomington, IN.

Browning, T. D. (2016, February 26). Teaching to your strengths: A workshop on core reflection. *Curriculum and Instruction Research and Creative Activity Symposium (CIRCAS)*, Bloomington, IN.

Browning, T. D. (2016, March 11). The layers of change: student teachers and flow. *7th Annual College of Education Graduate Student Conference*, Urbana, IL.

Browning, T. D. (2016, April 9). Teaching to your strengths: A workshop on core reflection. *Great Lakes Regional Counseling Psychology Conference*, Bloomington, IN.

Browning, T. D. (2016, May 14). The layers of change: Student teachers and flow. *Holistic Teaching and Learning Conference*, Winnipeg, Manitoba, CA.

Browning, T. D. (2016, October 14). Promoting an asset-based teacher education program using core reflection. *37th Annual Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice*, Dayton, OH.

Wilson, S., Riddle, M., Howell-Beck, C., Weiss, A., **Browning, T.D.** and Engebretson, K. (2016, November 12). Rethinking teaching in a pluralistic society. *National Association of Multicultural Educators 26th Annual Conference*, Cleveland OH.

Browning, T. D. (2017, May 1). Countering deficit discourse: Preservice teachers' experiences in field placements. *2017 American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting*, San Antonio, TX.

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Browning, T. D., Wilson, S., Beck, C., Weiss, A., and Engebretson, K. (Book Chapter Proposal Accepted). "I didn't know privilege existed before this": Service in a multicultural education course. In T. D. Meidl and M. S. Dowell (Eds). *Service Learning Initiatives in Teacher Education Programs.* IGI Global: Hershey, PA.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Summary of Undergraduate Courses Taught at Indiana University

E300	Teaching in a Pluralistic Society (Elementary)
M300	Teaching in a Pluralistic Society (Secondary)
S400	Field Based Seminar (Community of Teachers Seminar for Preservice Secondary Teachers)

Summary of Graduate Courses Taught at Indiana University

S500	Field Based Seminar (Community of Teachers Seminar for Preservice Secondary Teachers)

SERVICE ACTIVITIES

SERVICE TO SCHOOL OF EDUCATION & DEPARTMENT

2013 Member, Selection and Implementation Committee for Curriculum and Instruction Research and Creative Activity Symposium (CIRCAS)

2014 Co-Chair, Selection and Implementation Committee for Curriculum and Instruction Research and Creative Activity Symposium (CIRCAS)

MEMBERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME)
American Educational Research Association (AERA)