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“"We want to bring them into what we love": An investigation of desire in two alternative teacher preparation programs

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“WE WANT TO BRING THEM INTO WHAT WE LOVE”:
AN INVESTIGATION OF DESIRE IN TWO ALTERNATIVE
TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

by
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“We want to bring them into what we love”:
An investigation of desire in two alternative teacher preparation programs

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The final copy of this dissertation has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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“We want to bring them into what we love”: An investigation of desire in two alternative teacher preparation programs

Dissertation directed by Daniel Liston, Jennie Whitcomb, and Victoria Hand

Abstract

A great deal depends on preparing high quality teachers, and reformers of teacher preparation have recently drawn attention to the need for clearer delineations of effective practice, what it takes to be a teacher, and standards of preparation. Taken together, these reform proposals arguably frame a professional ideal for teaching. How this ideal and other ideals are established as desirable for beginning teachers during preparation remains relatively unexplored. In this study I thus tease out the desired ideals of teaching in two alternative residency-based teacher preparation programs, City Teacher Prep (CTP) and a Montessori teacher training program (MONT). Drawing from literature in the humanities and the learning sciences, I develop a conceptual framework of desire as socially constructed and conveyed to beginning teachers through orienting narratives that serve to direct them toward desired objects of teaching. I also postulate that beginners develop desires by making heartfelt investments in those objects. I use a constructivist grounded theory approach to collect and analyze observation and interview data. My findings reveal differences in the desired objects at each program suggestive of a tension between a professional ideal and vocational ideal of teaching. I also find evidence of standing desires for leadership among beginners at both programs that could result in their eventually leaving teaching. Through this investigation, I illuminate the conceptual features of desire and show how it can inform our understanding of teacher preparation.

Key Words: desire, teacher education, profession, vocation, sociocultural theory, activity theory
Dedicated to Thomas Salvatore Renga. We have so much great stuff to talk about when you grow up. But take your time.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

-Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

A lot is riding on preparing high quality teachers who are passionate about teaching and committed to making a difference in students’ lives. As Dewey (1916/1997) brought to our attention a century ago and many scholars have noted since, teachers serve an important role in a thriving, democratic society. We look to them to address many of our most pressing needs and issues. We ask that they pass on valuable knowledge and skills, provide care and support to our children, and contribute to the revitalization of our communities. Casting teaching in the best light, I think it is fair to say that we look to teachers with the hope that the world can be changed for the better through the education they provide to students.

I would contend that the burden of expectation placed upon teachers is also borne by those who prepare them, especially when the promises of teaching go unfulfilled. Over the last few decades a spotlight has been trained on teacher preparation, and a consensus has emerged that it has fallen short (Goodlad, 1991; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Labaree, 2004; Levine, 2006; Sykes, Bird, & Kennedy, 2010; Wiseman, 2012). The problems are many. Critics contend that teacher preparation programs fail to address classroom realities (Levine, 2006), which some attribute to the hegemony of education schools and their overreliance on progressive ideals (Labaree, 2004; Wilson & Tamir, 2008). Others maintain that preparation programs have neglected the importance of instructional practice (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hiebert & Morris, 2012; Thompson, Windschitl, & Braaten, 2013; Windschitl et al., 2009; Zeichner, 2012). And still others argue that preparation programs need to better attend to

Chapter 1
qualities considered essential for teaching (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2008) and necessary for fulfilling its moral imperative to serve all students (Diez & Murrell, 2010; Villegas, 2007). Then there is the sheer size of the endeavor. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, nearly 50 million K-12 students were enrolled in U.S. public schools in the fall of 2012, requiring 3.3 million teachers. With enrollment expected to rise, there is a projected need of 300,000 additional public school teachers by 2020. The growth in overall need for teachers raises concerns over the capacity to prepare enough high quality teachers for all students (Sykes, Bird, & Kennedy, 2010), especially those in underserved schools (Zeichner, 2003) where teacher attrition remains high (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010).

As I read them, critics and reformers of teacher preparation are raising a number of difficult questions that include: What instructional practices are most relevant for beginning teachers to learn? How should they learn those practices? What does it take to be a teacher? To stay a teacher? Who should be encouraged to teach? What short-term and long-term aims should teacher preparation frame for beginning teachers? And how should beginners and those who prepare them be assessed? A robust literature reveals that there are many ways to answer these questions, with the differences in responses arguably reflecting various ideals for teaching and teacher preparation. David Hansen (2001) notes that talk of ideals can make us squeamish given the many windmills chased over the years in the name of reform (cf., Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Goldstein, 2014). He observes that by definition ideals are difficult if not impossible to reach, and we are thus justified in being suspicious of them as often they bear little resemblance to what we see in real classrooms and schools. But Hansen argues that this weakness is also a strength, and he points out that we craft ideals so we have things to work towards—visions of the future to
preoccupy the imagination and inspire the hearts of teachers. Indeed, the elusiveness of ideals makes them alluring, and they tend to haunt the imagination in the guise of mythic characters (Edmundson, 2015). Without ideals, Hansen suggests that we couldn’t make progress toward realizing all that we hope for of teaching and teachers.

I find that recasting critiques and proposed reforms as arguments for (or against) particular ideals for teaching opens up the discussion of teacher preparation to invigorating and underexplored territory. It invites us to consider questions such as: What ideals do we hold of teaching? What ideals are we asking beginning teachers to pursue? Why those ideals and not others? Such questions can invite us to probe the contents of our imaginations and the emotionally rich, creative potential therein. This is not always easy. We often associate the imagination with fictionalizing and flights of fancy (Brann, 1993) rather than as a resource to be tapped. According to Dwayne Huebner (1993), “We have forgotten, or suppressed, that imagination is a foundation of our so-called ‘givens’” (p. 401). As typically framed, the crisis in teacher preparation is that programs fail to meet the needs of teachers who then fail to meet the needs of students (cf., Levine, 2006). But I would venture that the underlying crisis involves our attachment to the ideals contained within our imaginations.

Collectively, our imagination for teacher preparation is full of possibilities. The literature is replete with qualitative studies and conceptual explorations that paint attractive pictures of how we might imagine beginning teachers learning their craft. I have become increasingly convinced that the crisis is in our struggle to share and be genuinely receptive to different pictures of teaching and teacher education because the pictures we hold in our imaginations hold us captive. By this I mean that we work to inhabit the ideals we envision for teaching, often encapsulated in concepts such as grit, care, empathy, reflection, efficiency, etc., and grow
attached to them over time on a personal, heartfelt level. We build rationales and curricula for beginning teachers around our preferred ideals. We seek out coalitions with others who share our attachments and, bolstered by a supportive community, further our investment in those ideals. When we share what it is we want (or don’t want) of teaching and teacher preparation, I would argue that we are trying in part to convince others of the desirability of our preferred ideals—to cultivate attachments to what we consider to be the “givens” of teaching. That we can desire different ideals, or desire the same ideal with different levels of intensity, presents a source of conflict that seems underappreciated in discussions of the crisis in teacher preparation.

Bringing desire into the conversation carries us into the realm of *eros*—romantic love—in ways that can expose the heartfelt dimensions of teaching (Garrison, 1997; Liston, 2000) and make us uncomfortable as order and professional norms of emotional restraint are threatened (Kelly, 1997; Logue, 2012). Perhaps because of this discomfort, desire seems to be relatively unexplored conceptually and empirically. Indeed, to borrow Saint-Exupéry’s metaphor of the sailing vessel, much of the recent work in teacher preparation focuses on the “tasks and work” of learning to build the boat and sail it—to understanding how to train beginners to effectively employ the technologies and practices of teaching. Reformers also want to know what it takes to become a competent teacher and whom we might “drum up” to do the job. Less clear, I think, is how and in what ways beginning teachers are being taught to long for the immense but potentially rewarding promises of certain ideals and visions of teaching.

In this study I bring to the forefront such ideals and visions of teaching, which I treat as objects of desire in teacher preparation that are conveyed to beginning teachers through program activity. Below, I begin this effort by surveying the current landscape of teacher preparation reform to illustrate some of the challenges that teacher preparation programs face in trying to
satisfy all that is desired of them and the beginners they train. My reading of that landscape suggests that a professional ideal of teaching predominates the literature. But facets of this ideal are debatable, perhaps suggesting other things that can be desired of teaching and teacher preparation. After exploring some dilemmas and tensions in the professional ideal, I offer further elaboration on why desire is a concept worth investigating.

**Teacher preparation reform and the professional ideal**

As noted, there has been a lot of momentum behind efforts to improve how we prepare the nation’s teachers. A recurring theme among many reformers is that, unlike law or medicine, teacher preparation continues to suffer from a lack of professionalization (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Darling-Hammond, Wei, & Johnson, 2009; Shulman, 1998; Wise, 1989, 1990, 2005). Central to this argument is that teaching, and by extension teacher preparation, continues to provide students with varied and inequitable learning opportunities in the absence of a codified body of knowledge, sufficient research support, and professional community of practice (Shulman, 1998), as well as certification based on clear standards (Darling-Hammond, Wei, & Johnson, 2009; Wise, 2005). Lee Shulman (1998) argues that this movement is driven by an “ideal” of professionalism defined by particular attributes—service, theoretical understanding, practice, judgment, experiential learning, and community—each of which are sources of debate across the professions (p. 516). Shulman takes it as a positive sign that, from Dewey onward, the educational community has wrestled with and worked to refine each of these attributes. Though more work is needed, he suggests that the foundation for a profession of teaching and for a more professionalized form of teacher preparation is attainable.

Surveying the landscape of reform in teacher preparation, I would argue that the professional ideal of teaching is the dominant ideal (as opposed to a vocational ideal, which I
revisit in my discussion chapter). But that does not mean it is uniformly defined or understood, and I propose that much of the research and policy efforts can be seen as navigating tensions in an attempt to render the professional ideal’s shape and desirability. This in turn has consequences for the desires of teachers and teacher educators. Here I briefly highlight what I see as three interrelated dimensions informing this ideal: what a teacher does, who a teacher is, and the establishment of professional standards.

The search for a “beginners’ repertoire” of effective practice

The first dimension of a professional ideal that I focus on is in the practices of the profession and how best to distill and impart the intricacies of the work to beginning teachers. As David Labaree (2004) notes, teaching is “an enormously difficult job that looks easy” (p. 39). This is because much of the actual work of teaching often remains hidden from the public, yet beneath the surface teaching is complex and making sense of the work—What matters? Where to begin? To what end?—is a persistent challenge for teacher educators. As Labaree notes, “The sheer complexity and irreducible uncertainty surrounding teaching as a practice have made it unusually difficult for education schools to develop effective programs for preparing practitioners in the field” (p. 39). Faced with the daunting task of reducing the complexity of teaching to manageable chunks that can be covered in a limited amount of time, teacher educators default to presenting simplified routines and practices that barely scratch the surface of what the work entails. Yet that work is rich and complex—a juggling act of many tasks and responsibilities—and there is a lot to cover in what typically amounts to one or two years of preparation. Magdalene Lampert (2009) notes that, among other things, teaching entails planning lessons, working with students while students work independently or in small groups, instructing the whole class at once, linking lessons over time, covering the
Coordinating these various components is difficult and it can take years for teachers to achieve high levels of competence in the classroom (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012).

The complexity in teaching has led to concerted efforts to illuminate key teaching practices that are common, effective, and learnable by beginners (cf., Windschitl et al, 2009; Thompson, Windschitl, & Braaten, 2013). In many ways this work resembles the process-product research model of the latter half of the 20th century that fell out of vogue as its central claims were challenged and its usefulness questioned (Shulman, 1986; Tom, 1984; Zeichner, 2012). The success of the revived effort remains to be seen. It may depend in part on which line of research and resulting list of core practices takes root in the current landscape of teacher preparation. Perhaps the most commonly known example is Doug Lemov’s (2007) list of teaching techniques culled from the author’s observations of successful teachers (i.e., those who raise the standardized test scores) in poor performing schools. The 50 or so techniques, with names like pepper, on your mark, and do it again, are grouped into categories of practice such as setting expectations, engaging students, promoting critical thinking, and creating a classroom culture.

Another example is the Gates Foundation sponsored Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project, which is a collaboration between several major universities, non-profits, and educational consulting firms focused on finding out “how evaluation methods can best be used to tell teachers more about the skills that make them most effective and to help districts identify great teaching.” A major motivation of the project is to tackle the achievement gap through
improving teaching quality. Similar to Lemov, collaborators in this project are researching the skills and qualities of successful teachers to develop core competencies for effective teaching and to formulate ways to prepare and evaluate teachers. Unlike Lemov, they are using more rigorous research models built upon theoretically informed ideas of teaching like pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and they are drawing upon multiple measures of teaching performance, including achievement test scores, reflections, and inventories of student and teacher perceptions of schools, teaching, and learning.

Researchers have also been trying to isolate high leverage teaching practices (HLPs) that are “most likely to stimulate significant advancements in student thinking when executed with proficiency” by teachers, particularly beginners (Windschitl et al., 2009, pp. 3-4). These efforts tend to be interwoven with specific research agendas and disciplines. For example, researchers at the University of Washington have identified four core practices of effective science teaching (Windschitl et al., 2009; Thompson, Windschitl, & Braaten, 2013). These practices have beginning teachers focus students’ attention on scientific phenomena through specific discursive moves that elicit and enrich students’ initial ideas of those phenomena. Likewise, through the Teaching Works Project, Deborah Ball and collaborators at the University of Michigan have built upon practices identified in effective math instruction to develop a robust, interdisciplinary suite of HLPs to serve as the cornerstone of the university’s teacher education program.7

The aim of much of this research is to create what Windschitl et al. (2012) call a candidate core and what Feiman-Nemser (2001) refers to as a beginner’s repertoire that can serve as the basis of a practice-focused curriculum (Ball & Forzani, 2009). Such a curriculum would engage beginners in explicit, repetitious practice of the most vital aspects of teaching. Within such a curriculum,
teachers would learn to do particular tasks such as creating a respectful learning environment, assessing students’ math skills, or reviewing homework. They would learn to do these specific tasks, but they would also develop more general and adaptable skills of practice through their engagement in these tasks. They would learn how to consider the environments of their work and to coordinate their practice in context. (Ball & Forzani, 2009, p. 503)

Proponents of this effort see it as coming from research on actual teachers who are achieving desired learning outcomes, and they maintain that beginners should be studying their enactment of practices to determine what works, why, and for which students. The repertoire is thus intended as a place for beginners to start building out their practice so they can competently join and proudly represent the profession.

The emphasis on practice promises to provide beginners with the opportunity to become skillful in their craft and better accountable to the teaching profession and those whom it serves. However, there is some concern that the heavy emphasis on teaching practices could end up overshadowing other important dimensions of the work (Whitcomb, Liston, & Borko, 2009; Zeichner, 2012). As Mike Rose (2006) observed in his extensive study of American public schools, there is “no single profile of the Good Teacher” or penultimate list of practices defining good teaching, yet such lists are often generated and “have a tendency to be stripped of context, to become rigid prescriptions, at times reduced to slogan or commodity” (p. 9). Practices thus become things that teachers do or do not have in their personal toolkit versus things that they are developing, modifying, and trying to understand with respect to what they and others desire of their work. For beginning teachers, it seem possible that too much attention to practice may leave them unappreciative of why those practices matter and what ideals and desires they reflect. Even
so, reformers maintain that by identifying a core set of instructional practices they can ensure that beginners are presented with a clearer picture of how the ideal professional successfully navigates the classroom.

*Defining what it means to be and become a teacher*

Along with learning the practices of the profession, a second concern in the literature is over how teacher preparation should cultivate a professional practitioner. A growing body of work indicates that learning teaching requires making efforts to become a teacher—to undergo a transformation in terms of behavior, language, and vision into someone recognizable as a teacher, distinguishable from other formal positions in society (Alsup, 2006; Danielewicz, 2001; Hammerness et al., 2007; Horn, et al., 2008; Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008). What this entails, however, is not easily defined, and tensions exist between whether teaching is best seen as a role or an identity and whether it is better to allow beginners time to develop an identity/role or to just select individuals that have the traits or dispositions considered necessary for teaching.

**Teaching as a role versus an identity.** Arguing that teaching is a role, Deborah Ball and Francesca Forzani (2009) note that a hallmark of respected professions like law and medicine is that practitioners take on a professional role by enacting practices that are both uniquely tailored to fulfilling the demands of the work and justified by the professional community. They maintain that the beginning teacher’s acceptance of professional rather than personal authority is crucial to adopting the role of teacher. They acknowledge that role taking is anathema to the modern project of becoming a unique individual. But they argue that keeping the focus exclusively on student learning entails the deliberate suspension of aspects of one’s self. One’s personal religious convictions, for example, have no place in public school teaching. Similarly, it is
inappropriate to teach only the books one enjoys, to go barefoot in class, or to decide not to interact with students or parents whom one finds annoying (p. 499).

As they frame it, teachers have a commitment to their work that cannot be subject to personal whim or preference. By treating teaching as a role, beginning teachers can maintain a comfortable distance between themselves and what the profession demands of them in the classroom.

Less convinced by the argument that teaching is a role, Jane Danielewicz (2001) argues that the beginning teacher needs to learn to “inhabit the classroom as if it is the most natural place in the world” (p. 10). In her view this entails more than merely “playing a role” because “[r]oles are flimsy and superficial, transitory and easily adopted or discarded. They seem to be whole and complete, like a ready-made set of clothes that one can put on before class and take off after” (p. 10). She argues that framing teaching as identity development instead of role adoption captures the deep imprint left by the work, or what she refers to as a “commitment of self.” Unlike the performances of actors, who don the clothing, language, and mannerisms to convincingly fulfill a role, she argues that the performance of teaching is a performance of self rather than a performance of role with palpable effects on the practitioner.

Others have likewise found it valuable to view teaching as an identity that needs to be developed. In their study of beginning teachers, clergy, and clinical psychologists, Matthew Ronfeldt and Pam Grossman (2008) noted that “[n]ovices do not take up all strategies they encounter. Some ways of doing in classrooms can represent ways of being that run counter to who they want to become as professionals” (italics in original, p. 44). They noted how beginners described both desired and feared ‘selves’ constituting a “repertoire of possible selves” that were factoring into their development (p. 48). In other words, learning to become a teacher had
personal and emotional dimensions that were difficult to extricate from the professional identities that they were constructing. Complicating matters, they observed, was how each beginner appeared to be developing a slightly different teaching identity that was personally meaningful (see also Horn et al., 2008).

Discerning desirable qualities of professionals. Similarly interested in the ontological dimensions of teaching, other researchers have been seeking to tease out the necessary qualities of effective teachers. One strand of this work has made a case for the importance of cultivating desired professional dispositions (Diez & Murrell, 2010). Ana Villegas (2007) goes so far as to suggest that teacher preparation programs are justified in demanding that beginning teachers exhibit particular dispositions, or “tendencies to act in a particular manner under particular circumstances, based on [personal] beliefs” (p. 373). For Villegas, it is paramount that beginners demonstrate a social justice disposition that seeks to directly address poverty, racism, and other pressing social issues through teaching.

Another strand uses the tools and concepts of psychology to look for desirable teaching traits. One such effort that appears to be gaining traction is research into grit, a trait defined as an individual’s “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014) (p. 2). Claire Robertson-Kraft and Angela Duckworth (2014) posit that the grueling demands of urban classrooms require teachers capable of persisting in those conditions. They have thus developed a protocol for identifying individuals who exhibited grit in college and might therefore be targeted for recruitment into teaching. This study bears resemblance to work aiming to determine the characteristics of those who choose teaching and persist in it (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2008), and the increasingly common use of
teacher-qualities tests like the TeacherFit Inventory to winnow out applicants for teaching positions.

**Debating professional priorities.** The focus on *who teachers are* has some concerned that it is coming at the expense of more fruitful considerations of *what they do* and *how they might do it more effectively*. James Hiebert and Anne Morris (2012) maintain that the “belief that good teaching is achieved by getting the right people into the classroom is so ingrained in the U.S. educational culture that teaching and teachers are treated interchangeably” (p. 98). They worry that efforts to find those people may give the wrong impression that teaching is less about the practices than who wields them, and it could be distracting from efforts to understand what good teaching looks like and how beginners develop important instructional skills. However, Hiebert & Morris may be too quick to jettison the ontological aspects of teacher preparation. Parker Palmer (1997) claims that those who insist that teaching is readily boiled down to practices fail to see how “[t]echnique is what teachers use until the real teacher arrives” (p. 30). And he laments that too often teachers are not given time or the support for the “real” teacher to emerge. Even so, Hiebert & Morris’ point is well taken when the discussion moves beyond trying to understand the process of becoming a teacher—whether it’s coming to inhabit a role or develop an identity—to trying to find ways of selecting individuals in the hope that they have what it takes to teach. Questions not only of practice but also of maturation, personal growth, and purpose may be left unanswered and underappreciated.

*Standards and measures for professional preparation*

Finally, a third component shaping the professional ideal, built in part on the first two components I have presented, is a concurrent push to develop and assess professional standards for teacher preparation. For over 50 years the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher
Education (NCATE) has been influential in setting and monitoring such standards, a role it inherited from the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) (Wise, 2005). The tension between state and national control of standardization seems to have tilted more toward the national under the current administration, with an emphasis on identifying and employing specific measures to ensure compliance with standards for preparing teachers.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law mandated that all students have access to a highly qualified teacher but defined quality only in terms of content knowledge instead of instructional performance and left out teacher preparation altogether. To address the shortcomings, Secretary Duncan made a commitment to improving teacher education through initiatives like Race to the Top, which provided cash rewards to states that implement approved systems of teacher preparation, development, and evaluation (Department of Education, 2011). More recently, Secretary Duncan proposed federal regulations that will assess the quality of teacher education programs based on a series of metrics of teacher performance, including student achievement data.9

I would venture that those metrics arguably hold a certain appeal as a way of sharpening the focus of teacher preparation. And we now have the capacity to use data fairly easily to make decisions regarding the quality of teachers and teacher preparation programs.10 This could afford a more objective view of the problems and the strengths and limitations of certain approaches to teacher preparation. But a heavy reliance on data could prove problematic if it cuts too sharply and further silences the voices of teachers and teacher educators.

Marilyn Cochran-Smith and colleagues in the Boston College Evidence Team (2009) point out that teacher education is not ideologically neutral. Rather, it is built upon cultural
values and beliefs about teaching and learning. This has them suspicious about calls for data-driven decision-making in teacher preparation, and they contend that there is a difference between a culture where evidence “drives” decisions and a culture where evidence “informs” decisions. The former suggests a narrow, almost empiricist focus and a linear, uncomplicated conception of the relationship between evidence and policy/practice. On the other hand, the latter acknowledges that evidence alone can never tell us what to do. Rather, evidence always has to be interpreted. (p. 466)

John Dirkx (2006a) likewise maintains that evidence-based practice is less the problem than what counts as evidence and who gets to participate in defining and interpreting it. He finds that teachers’ insider knowledge is often undervalued in current discussions over what is defined as good practice. As a result, Dirkx observes that they often have to act on values and strive to fulfill desires for teaching that they don’t always share with policy-makers. To this point Hansen (2001) observes how teachers come to be “treated like hired hands” and “feel the weight of trying to promote various desired outcomes—academic, social, political, economic…” (p. 6).

Indeed, John Goodlad (1995) suggests that it is cruel how policy-makers offer teachers little say in defining desired reforms for teaching and then blaming them when the reforms don’t work as planned. Though well intended, it therefore seems that reforms aimed at prioritizing data and using evidence to “drive” decisions over what counts as quality risk crushing teachers under the weight of desires that may not be their own.

To bolster teaching as a profession, policy-makers hope to provide clarity and direction for teacher preparation programs to develop viable paths for beginners to realize desired outcomes in teaching. This is new terrain for teacher educators, who have historically been less regulated than K-12 teachers. If the Department of Education’s proposed regulations for teacher
preparation succeed in becoming policy, they may join those they prepare in finding themselves with less of a voice in shaping the professional ideal and its desirability.

_A missing discussion in teacher preparation reform_

Though brief, this survey of the landscape of teacher preparation reform should suffice to show some of the key challenges faced by programs as they work to prepare quality professionals. There is the matter of what instructional practices are most likely to lead beginning teachers to success in the classroom; concerns over how programs might cultivate ways of being and becoming a successful teacher; and what aims and benchmarks should define success in teaching and teacher preparation. As I read the teacher education literature, there are no easy answers and many tensions to be navigated if a professional ideal is to emerge as a desirable one for teaching in 21st century. Consensus on this ideal may be difficult to achieve, a problem compounded by the possibility of other ideals for teaching that may be less amenable to the proposed reforms I discussed above. For example, those advocating for a vocational view of teaching that stresses a call to serve the needs individuals on a more personal, emotional, and spiritual level (Buijs, 2005; Hansen, 2001; Huebner, 1987; Palmer, 1997) may envision the service aspect of teaching differently than advocates of professionalism. They may also take issue with efforts to codify the dispositional qualities of the ideal professional.

Even if the professional ideal were uniformly desired in the educational community, there would still be the matter of how beginning teachers come into the profession and engage with the desired ideal, whether it’s desiring to reach professional standards, get better at the core practices, or become a kind of teacher with a particular identity or way of inhabiting the role. Indeed, there has been little discussion in the literature on desire in teaching and teacher preparation. Absent such discussion, it seems possible that reformers might be overlooking how
the heart factors in to the ways beginners learn teaching. Indeed, though limited, there is scholarship indicating that desire may be an important and powerful dimension of teaching.

**Desire in teaching**

Desire is a concept with untapped potential for discussions on how best to prepare teachers. There are compelling reasons to believe that desire is socially constructed (Holland, 1992; Smith, 2009) and an important factor in professional activity (Nardi, 2005), and I suggest that it is a concept that can enrich our understanding of the relationship between practice, identity, and *telos* in teacher preparation. But just as much of our learning is ubiquitous in our daily activity and thus often goes unnoticed (Lave, 2000), it is my contention that desire is present in our lives in ways we tend to take for granted. Writing for an audience of Christian collegiate educators, the theologian James K.A. Smith (2009) makes a similar argument and foregrounds desire’s presence in teaching in a way that I find pertinent to secular, K-12 contexts. He maintains that teachers would better serve the teleological consequences of learning if they attended to their role in directing students’ desires. To this end he poses the following questions:

What if education … is not primarily about the absorption of ideas and information, but about the formation of the hearts and desires? … What if education was primarily concerned with shaping our hopes and passions—our visions of “the good life”—and not merely about the dissemination of data and information as inputs to our thinking? What if the primary work of education was the transforming of our imagination rather than the saturation of our intellect? (p. 18)

Smith challenges the view that an education is primarily a cerebral affair—a matter of belief, view, or knowledge. He also places a premium on learning environments and sees a strong
connection between teaching and ontology, noting how “behind every constellation of educational practices is a set of assumptions about the nature of human persons—about the kinds of creatures we are” (p. 28). Smith observes how we not only construct ideals but also orient ourselves toward them and shape the world accordingly.

Secular scholars of education have similarly found it helpful to link teaching to desired futures and ways of being. Jacqueline Cossentino (2005) has documented how the Montessori teaching tradition has deep roots in a specific cosmic vision of the good life that gives meaning and purpose to its practices and practitioners. And Jim Garrison (1997) notes how Dewey framed teaching as fundamentally driven by educational commitments to particular values and visions of society. Garrison contends that great teaching requires educators to directly engage these visions and the often intensely felt passions they foment. This is why, he observes, the ancient Greeks saw romantic desire—eros—as vitally important to education. What stars to follow and why were considered significant matters because “[w]e become what we love. Our destiny is in our desires, yet what we seek to possess soon comes to possess us in thought, feeling, and action” (p. xiii).

Dan Liston (2004) sees such passion in teaching evident within a lure of learning—eros manifested in a desire to experience the awe and wonder of the grace of great things. For teachers this desire can find expression in efforts to connect children to the world and the various ways it can be understood and experienced. Christine Downing (2009) gives voice to this sentiment when she says of her own teaching,

…I want to communicate my love—not exactly of my students, though not exactly not of my students—but more explicitly my love of the books, the authors, the ways of looking at the world that have moved and inspired me, and
my love of the process of inquiry that brought me to those books, those writers; I
want to encourage my students to find what might move them in the same way—
and come to love looking for it. (italics in original, p. 153)

Validating such emotions, Liston argues that without desire teaching and learning are lifeless
devices and students are unlikely to inherit a love of learning. He observes that teachers who
build their practice upon a love of learning maintain a heartfelt connection to their work. They
come to appreciate how teaching can be an artful instruction not only in ways to acquire
knowledge but also in how to love and cherish that knowledge in particular ways.

Despite its promise, an engagement with passionate desire is arguably rare in
contemporary U.S. schools. Jennifer Logue (2012) suggests that this is because rosy portrayals of
eros in education tend to overlook the darker side of desire. Less discussed, in her view, is how
desire can drive people to defensiveness and obsessive behavior. Indeed, in teaching, unfulfilled
desire can be deeply disheartening (Liston, 2000). Logue suggests that educational institutions
are designed to prevent desire’s ill effects by prioritizing order and predictability to function
smoothly. This in turn breeds a preference for more sanitized and measurable forms of learning.
Erotic desire threatens this order as a force that upends certainties while feeding radical
possibilities. According to Logue, “The unruly, unpredictable, and unconscious aspects of eros
render the school or university’s attempt to mold and monitor a knowable, disembodied self, a
self measured by predetermined skills and predictable outcomes, impossible” (p. 73). As such,
teachers are expected to disavow themselves of any unsanctioned passions (Kelly, 1997) and
eros is often confined or scrubbed from formal educational settings, though not without costs. In
the worst of circumstances, it seems that the suppression of desire can lead to what Dan Liston
(2000) vividly describes as

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a darkness of the teaching soul … It is a darkness that obscures all that was so apparent and vibrant, becoming the only visible cover in a world that now lacks discernible features. It is a darkness that forgets the landscape and features of teaching. (p. 81)

Liston notes how such feelings can be trying on teachers, which too often leads administrators to propose quick fixes that often deflect or cover up despair. This can result in a belittling of teachers’ emotional experiences of their work in ways that can lead to guilt, anger, depression, and feelings of shame (Zembylas, 2003).

As I read this literature, attending to desire in teaching invites a richer consideration of the emotional experiences of classroom life and the role of the heart in the endeavor. It allows joy and despair to be a part of the conversation on what matters in teaching. And it can offer a more compassionate view of teachers as people who want certain things of themselves and their work.

*Inquiring into desire within teacher preparation*

Though the authors in the last section are mostly referring to K-12 teachers and institutions, I would argue that teacher preparation programs might be vulnerable to the same tendency to downplay desire for the sake of maintaining order and consistency. And yet, as Smith (2009) suggests, education is as much about forming hearts and desires as gaining knowledge, which means preparation programs are likely orienting the hearts of beginning teachers toward particular visions of teaching through their activities. Indeed, Karen Hammerness (2006) has shown how beginners can develop powerful, heartfelt attachments to particular visions of teaching. She maintains that beginners imagine what they could be doing in the classroom, how they could be interacting with their students, and what they and their students could be achieving. They envision
classroom activities, discussions, and projects. They picture the kind of learning environment in which they and their students could work—including the design of the classroom, the type of school, and even the kind of community that would support their dreams. These images of ideal classroom practice are teachers’ visions. They embody teachers’ hopes for the future and play a significant role in their lives and work. (italics in original, p. 1)

Following four beginners for several years, she observed how they contrasted their visions against classroom realities and became more motivated and inspired in their work when what they desired seemed achievable within the constraints of their circumstances. But unfortunately the visions remained elusive, and all four of the beginners she studied chose to leave teaching not long into their careers. Hammerness wondered if their visions were too vivid and personally compelling, and she wondered what role their preparation programs might have played in setting them up to desire unattainable visions of teaching. I am intrigued by this latter possibility, which seems insufficiently addressed in the literature.

The title for my study comes from a teacher educator I observed, who informed her beginning teachers that part of the challenge of teaching was “to bring [people] into what we love.” It struck me that, through her instruction, she was also trying to bring the beginning teachers into what she loved of teaching—to direct their hearts to particular ideals and visions of classroom life and how they might become good teachers. Indeed, while I agree that a lot is riding on the preparation of high quality beginning teachers, I propose that for beginners achieving “quality” may be more than a matter of learning the standards, practices, and ways of being a teacher, but also a matter of investing one’s heart in specific manifestations of those things and coming to develop certain desires for teaching.
To investigate this claim, I sought to better understand how particular ideals and visions of teaching emerge as desirable during teacher preparation. Such an undertaking required a robust conceptualization of desire, which I provide in the second chapter. For this task I draw from scholarship in Western philosophy and the work of a theologian, which I put into conversation with sociocultural theories and concepts from the learning sciences. This leads me to a conceptual model and series of research questions that guided my study. In the third chapter I then describe the two alternative teacher preparation programs that I chose to study—City Teacher Prep (CTP) and a Montessori teacher training program (MONT)—and I offer a methodological framework and stepwise discussion for how I examined desire in the programs. The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters include my findings. The fourth and fifth chapters lay out how the instructors and program leaders in CTP and MONT, respectively, appeared to be directing beginning teachers to certain desired ideals. The sixth chapter explores comments made by beginning teachers in both programs regarding a possible desire to eventually leave teaching. I also offer insights from a beginning teacher on why he chose to leave traditional public school teaching to become a Montessori teacher. Finally, in the seventh and final chapter, I consider the lessons learned from my analysis. This brings me back to the professional ideal described within this introductory chapter and how it compares to the vocational ideal in terms of desire. I conclude with some limitations, implications, and directions for future research.

1 Statistics from the National Center for Educational Statistics website, [http://nces.ed.gov](http://nces.ed.gov)
2 Throughout the text I use the terms “beginning teacher” and “beginner” rather than “novice,” “candidate” or “pre-service teacher.” The notion of a “novice” implies a power differential relative to “experts” that may be present in teacher preparation, though I want to avoid perpetuating it; “candidate” defines learners relative to the bureaucratic formality of licensure; and “pre-service” teacher seems inappropriate for several of the individuals in one of the residency programs in this study who were in fact serving as teachers of record during their residency year. Even so, I still want to acknowledge that learning teaching occurs along a temporal continuum and find it preferable to note that the individuals were at the beginning of a journey. Also, there is precedence for using “beginner” in the literature (cf., Craig, 2014).

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Though unconventional, I find the interactions Vivian Paley (1990) describes between her graduate students and herself while they work together in early childhood classrooms to be especially compelling. Her merger of thoughtful, compassionate scholarship with instruction strikes me as unlike anything currently happening in teacher preparation with the exception of maybe Michael Cole’s (2006) “fifth dimension” after-school programs. Reviewing current policy trends, Dana Goldstein (2014) suggests that reformers are actually captivated by the “ideal of the all-powerful individual teacher, solely responsible for raising student achievement in measurable ways” (p. 204). In this view, Goldstein notes that teachers are recognized as having penultimate power in the classroom when it comes to driving student learning, though they are afforded little power to shape the terms of their work. The professional ideal as I frame it thus seems to be contributing to this vision of the teacher, and perhaps it is this vision rather than professionalism writ-large that is more deserving of my concern. I can imagine the teaching profession being constructed around other images of teaching and teachers based on Dewey, Noddings, Freire, or other philosophers.

Lemov has just released a second edition, Teach Like a Champion 2.0 (2015; San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass), with more techniques and a foreword by Norman Atkins, who co-founded the Uncommon Schools charter network with Lemov and is president of Relay GSE. At times the new text reads like a shameless promotion for both institutions. Lemov also maintains as he did in the first edition that teaching is an art that has to be practiced, something he says that struck him upon seeing the extensive sketches Picasso made in the margins of his school notebooks. One wonders if he sees the irony in building a philosophy for good teaching from evidence of a bored student. Indeed, those sketches reveal that the famous artist was seeking an outlet for a passion that still remains undervalued in schools. At least Picasso’s teachers were bad enough (presumably) to be unaware or indifferent to his sketching. A teacher skilled at Lemov’s techniques would have kept him too busy for such off-topic activity.

Information accessed at www.metproject.org

For more information, I recommend visiting the website: www.teachingworks.org

NCATE recently merged with the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) to form the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation (CAEP).

The proposed rules were accessed via the Federal Register, a website of the National Archives and Records Administration, on December 22, 2014, at https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/12/03/2014-28218/teacher-preparation-issues

Indeed, I would argue that there is an allure to the analytic power afforded by fast, affordable computing technologies that allow researchers to collect, organize, and analyze data. It seems to me that this allure is tethered to a much older allure for social efficiency that tends to emerge as a compelling ideal in times of perceived chaos and dysfunction in public schooling (Labaree, 2010; Lagemann, 1989). I am worried, though, that the reach of digital technology is so pervasive and so integrated into our personal lives that it will prove tougher to shake than in the past. That said, it may give rise to a stronger desire for the opposite—the teaching equivalent of the slow foods movement.
Chapter 2: Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

As proposed in the last chapter, desire may be useful for making visible emotional terrain that is often avoided or inadequately characterized in empirical studies of teaching and teacher education. In an era driven by post-Enlightenment rationality where our desires are often treated as threats to order and stability (Logue, 2012)—seemingly irrational urges for things like sex and power that must be subordinated to reason and either mastered or driven into hiding—I contend that we risk overlooking the nature of those urges and limit our understanding of them. Though sex and power are significant objects of desire (cf., Butler, 2004), I want to draw attention to the possibility that we can long for many things. In teacher preparation, for example, beginning teachers can desire for lessons to go as planned, for mentors to recognize progress, to have fun with students, and to share one’s love of a discipline. But what exactly does it mean to desire? And how might desire be examined empirically among beginning teachers in a teacher preparation setting? To address these questions I call upon scholarship from a range of disciplines.

In the first part of the chapter I establish desire’s conceptual contours. For this I lean on the work of Timothy Schroeder (2004, 2015), who offers a summary and helpful conceptual features of desire as it has been taken up within the Western philosophical tradition. I also draw heavily on the religious studies scholar James Smith (2009, 2013), whose framing of desire I read as having four key components: (1) a heartfelt longing or yearning (2) for the fulfillment of an object persisting within the imagination (3) that emerges through and may incite embodied, habituated, social practice, (4) with consequences for who we are and will become. Features of this definition, notably the premise that activity is socially situated and object-directed, have been theorized and empirically supported in the learning sciences. As such, in the second part of
the chapter I turn to sociocultural theories of learning and activity. Drawing on a study by Dorothy Holland (1992) I propose that desire may be conceptually preferable to motivation, which is what the field has tended to rely on to make sense of the phenomena I am interested in studying. I then use tenets of activity theory to further define an “object” and individuals as desiring beings who not only come to understand but also to long for the objects driving social activity. To appreciate the nuance of this longing and how it may emerge through and be evident in social activity, I propose the notion of a heartfelt investment that subjects can take in the objects of activity. In the third part of the chapter I present a theory of story and narrative that permits me to analyze discussion and preparation activity as framing orienting narratives (Smith, 2013) that direct beginners to the objects considered desirable. At the conclusion of the chapter I reveal a model and research questions based on these theories and concepts that helped guide my examination of how beginning teachers, as desiring subjects, appeared to be engaging with and perhaps showing signs of a heartfelt investment in the objects of teaching, pedagogy, and ontology as framed by program leaders in their teacher preparation programs.

**Conceptualizing desire in Western philosophy and religious studies**

The term ‘desire’ is derived from the Latin desiderare (to long for), which in turn comes from de sidere (of the stars) (Hollis, 2010). It would appear that our language of yearning has roots in early travelers’ use of the stars to mark distance and direction. Long ago a glance upward to the cosmos could stir wanderlust or remind weary travelers of the comforts of far off homelands. The ancients also ascribed divine meaning to the stars, projecting onto them mythic ideals and purposes for human activity. To conceptualize desire I begin with a brief discussion of what those ancients in the Western philosophical tradition came to make of desire. From there I
present a more recent framing by James Smith that establishes conceptual dimensions that I find helpful for engaging in an empirical study of desire in teacher preparation.

*Desire in the Western philosophical tradition*

Throughout history philosophers have sought to understand desire and its role in daily life. Characterizing this large body of work, Timothy Schroeder (2015) suggests that desire is fundamentally a state of mind concerned with fulfilling a want or perceived need. He notes that the differences in these theories are due in large part to differences among philosophers as to the effects of being in a desiring state of mind and which of those effects are considered more salient. He identifies several major theoretical families that have formed around various interpretations of desire’s presence and purpose in our lives. *Action-based* theories define desire as dispositional, or as the strength of one’s inclination to take whatever action is believed will fulfill one’s longing for something. This interpretation tends to shortchange emotional features of having and acting on desire, which has given rise to *pleasure-based* theories focusing on the compulsion to seek fulfillment and satisfaction. Schroeder observes that this interpretation elevates hedonistic impulses and is dismissive of the human propensity for moral evaluation. This critique has led to a view of desire as *good-based* following from the Socratic notion that people desire that which they think is good. Then there are *attention-based* theories of desire centered on the tendency for individuals to fixate on some inclination around which they construct reasons to satiate the fixation. So for example, a person can find himself often thinking about doughnuts and one day buy a dozen to eat, justifying the choice as a way to support the local doughnut shop. Finally, *holistic theories* of desire incorporate some admixture of pleasure, morality, and attention, which are seen as overlapping and often inseparable.
Schroeder also highlights additional dilemmas that appear in theoretical discussions of desire. One is making sense of multiple desires and how to reconcile or negotiate tensions and conflicts that seem to arise among multiple desires. Indeed, he notes that humans have many different desires and expressions of desire that feed into one another. Imagine a person standing on the shore of a cool lake on a hot day: that person can feel the urge to jump into the lake (a desire for pleasure) and also want to be the kind of person who acts on such impulses (a desire for recognition). Another challenge is what to make of relative intensity, or situations where a desire is felt more or less strongly despite its consistent and unwavering presence in a person’s life. Take, for example, the desire those of us who teach have for the welfare of our students. On days where we are in a good mood we may feel more inclined to act on that desire to the benefit of our students than on days when we are in a sour mood. Likewise, our desire may be felt more strongly when we sense that our actions might improve the students’ welfare immediately versus in a few days or months. The strength of our desire as manifested in our actions may thus appear to waver even if our underlying desire for our students’ welfare remains fairly consistent. Also, certain desires may increase or decrease in intensity with respect to circumstance and social conditions. Thus, on a bad day we may feel a stronger desire to get better instructionally than on a day where everything goes as planned. As with student welfare, the underlying desire to improve may remain consistent even if it is amplified by environmental conditions.

Schroeder offers two conceptual elaborations that help make some sense of the issues of multiple desires and relative intensity of desire. The first is the distinction between desiring a state of affairs as opposed to desiring a physical object. Schroeder observes that in everyday conversation we often share our desires for things like a pair of shoes or a burrito as if they were only the things we desired. But he points out that what we really want is the situation or scenario
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that desire fulfillment will bring about, such as the self-satisfaction of being seen in the shoes or the feeling of satiation from eating the burrito. He goes on to note how seeing desire as wanting to bring about a state of affairs allows for an expanded and complex view of desire as it actually impacts our lives and the world around us. It also permits a more expansive view of desire that honors our capacity to yearn for more abstract things such as the welfare of children or social justice.

The second elaboration is a distinction he makes between standing desires, which are present in a person’s mind but latent, and occurrent desires that appear active or at the forefront of a person’s mind in a given moment. Schroeder notes that the distinction allows for the possibility of multiple desires that are variously triggered by a person’s engagement with the world and movement between any number of social and material contexts that can shift a desire sharply into focus. So, for example, the teacher in the earlier example may carry a desire for his students’ welfare home with him but have a desire to clean the house or a desire for his own child’s welfare taking precedence as the occurrent desire. The desire for student welfare still remains but it has receded in his psyche to a standing position. But then he may check his email while at home and read a message from a parent sharing a concern about possible bullying that brings student welfare back from a standing desire to an occurrent desire as he resolves to address the issue.

Schroeder (2004) helpfully distills these theories into three major components that he argues should be examined in any exploration of desire: pleasure (and displeasure), motivation (and inhibition), and reward (and punishment). Pleasure is evident in a sense of satisfaction, specifically the experience of having our expectations at least met, and preferably exceeded, within a given situation.¹ Motivation is the conscious focus on goal attainment—the fixation on a
particular outcome and how persistent a person is to attain it. And *reward* is the feedback or stimulus received in response to activity. As I interpret them, each component evokes a suite of reflective questions:

- **Pleasure**: What do I require to be satisfied? What do I enjoy about an activity I am engaged in? How does it compare to my expectations?
- **Motivation**: What preoccupies my mind? What am I after? Why do I choose to take certain actions? What do I hope to accomplish through those actions?
- **Reward**: How did it feel to take certain actions? What feedback keeps me pursuing my goals? Why do I avoid some situations but seek out others?

How we answer these questions may reveal how our desires permeate, shape, and direct who we are and what we do. They may also reveal the things to which we have forged affective connections and feel emotionally invested in; the state of affairs in our daily lives that our sense of happiness and fulfillment have come to depend upon.

Schroeder observes that the three components overlap and inform one another. In fact, he argues that reward is underappreciated in contemporary discussions of desire because it is seen as invoking the ghost of behaviorism. And yet, he contends that acknowledging rewards and feedback is crucial for understanding how desire is learned, and he points to recent neurobiology research on the brain’s reward centers to support his claim. Whether or not one buys the biological argument (for a dissenting view, see Latham, 2006), the broader implication that desire is both experienced bodily and learned permits desire to be contextually situated as a state of mind that emerges through individuals’ interactions with the world.

The Western philosophical tradition thus provides clues for how desire may be visible or manifest among participants in a teacher preparation program. Expressed pleasures could point
to moments of desire fulfillment, perhaps as beginning teachers experience success with implementing challenging practices. Of course, beginners may just desire the praise even if they don’t have a strong desire to master the practices for what they are intended to accomplish. A program might use rewards such as scores to direct its beginning teachers to levels of proficient practice that should be desired. It might also position a particular outcome of practice as desirable, like raising student achievement, in a way that commands the beginners’ attention as they teach in the classroom. Schroeder’s suggestion of standing desires that can be present even in the absence of discernible action also raises interesting questions around a beginner’s failure to employ a program’s preferred teaching practices. Rather than indicating a lack of desire to become a good teacher, it could be that there are competing desires or environmental factors inhibiting such a desire to become occurrent such that it holds the beginner’s attention in a way that leads to her making noticeable changes in practice.

Schroeder and the Western philosophers thus offer ample groundwork for conceptualizing desire, though I find that the concept requires some fine-tuning for understanding the relation between individuals and their participation in social activity.

*Desire as a state of mind that emerges through social practice*

The theologian James Smith (2009, 2013) maintains that desire is a crucial and often neglected component of social activity. Smith is especially concerned over a perceived lack of attention among Christian educators to how effectively they are nurturing students’ desire to realize the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. Expanding on theories of desire from Western philosophy he views desire as a product of our communal rituals and their accompanying stories, which direct our hearts towards certain objects (Figure 2.1). He argues that we must learn those
rituals and stories, or *liturgies* in religious vernacular, and do so though participation in community. Smith (2009) maintains that such communally enacted practices

> aim our love to different ends precisely by training our hearts through our bodies. They prime us to approach the world in a certain way, to value certain things, to aim for certain goals, to pursue certain dreams, to work together on certain projects. In short, every liturgy constitutes a pedagogy that teaches us, in all sorts of precognitive ways, to be a certain kind of person. (p. 25)

As members of various communities, religious and secular, Smith observes how we are always engaged in what amounts to a pedagogy of desire that serves to establish what is loved, how it is loved, and to what end. He notes that when we ask people to do or be something we are directing them to what matters—to craft maps of their hearts in particular ways that orient them to themselves, others, and the world in particular ways.

**Figure 2.1** Smith’s (2009, p. 48) model depicts how social practice is directed toward the realization of particular futures that are idealized and can only be imagined. Smith’s model adds in a crucial component missing from similar models in the learning sciences (see Figure 2.2): the desiring heart of the practitioner that is aimed through social activity toward the future. Reproduced with permission from the author.
Love here is understood as embodied feelings, acquired through our perceptual experiences with the world, that stir up powerful emotions of joy and longing directed toward persons, places, and any number of things. As with Schroeder, Smith also notes that we can desire things that are physically distant from the daily activity of our lives, such as wanting relief for people in a war-torn country or desiring the well-being of relatives living overseas. They can also be memories of the past, recollections of family members, pets, or special moments that persist in our thoughts. We can even yearn for things that do not exist (yet) except within our minds, such as an image of an unborn child or a haunting dream of a majestic and unsullied wilderness.

Indeed, Smith (2013) contends that the imagination plays a crucial role in desire as our minds construct maps and project outwards, constructing visions of the horizon and longed-for destinations. “It is because I imagine the world (and my place in it) in certain ways,” Smith explains, “that I am oriented by fundamental loves and longings. It is because I ‘picture’ the work as this kind of place, this kind of ‘environment’, that I then picture ‘the good life’ in a certain way that draws me toward it and thus construe my obligations and responsibilities accordingly” (italics in original, p. 125). Our minds paint rich images, and we yearn to realize those images by creating or entering into the settings and situations in which we imagine ourselves thriving.

Smith observes that the imagination, contrary to popular belief, is limited. It isn’t that the mind is incapable of imagining an endless variety of fantastical and improbable worlds. But rather, those imagined worlds are crafted from the corporeal, perceptual knowledge accrued through habits that have evolved in response to specific environmental demands. The resources one has available for imaginative construction are thus limited by one’s social and material
surroundings. But individuals aren’t passive receptacles of those resources; they are active participants who interact with and co-construct the worlds they inhabit. Smith therefore ascribes special significance to practices in shaping desire. He maintains that there is an “irreducible, unique understanding that is only carried in practices and only absorbed through our immersion (over time) in those practices” (p. 13). Even so, we are thinking beings, and Smith is careful to distinguish imagining from thoughtful introspection. To argue for greater attention to desire is not to argue against rationality. Rather, it is to appreciate how that rationality is “disciplined and trained and habituated” with respect to our desires (p. 13). Through practice we train our passions as well as our reasons for pursuing those passions.

For Smith, a conceptual virtue of desire is that it privileges affective knowledge that is too often treated as beneath the propositional knowledge of the intellect. He contends that practices socially enacted over time develop our teleologic knowledge, which individuals experience as gut-level, emotional signals regarding where one is and is headed. A learning environment attuned to a pedagogy of desire would therefore take seriously those responses and each individual’s respective knowledge of the future. It would foreground the maps and compasses each person brings and proactively engage them, thus making the heart and its desires a more explicit part of learning.

Smith’s discussion of desire thus takes the notion from Western philosophy of a state of mind and specifies an aspect of mind—the imagination—within which certain objects persist and take hold of the heart. He points to social activity as important because it provides the resources for constructing those objects in the imagination as both desirable and undesirable. Indeed, while socially situated practice aims the heart toward certain objects it may aim it away from other objects. In Smith’s formulation of desire, I also see him as inviting us to reposition the

Chapter 2
conceptual inquiry from the philosopher’s concern over how desire works within a single mind to how it works between multiple hearts coming to yearn for various things through participation in the complex dynamics of social interaction. And yet the individual is not entirely lost, as Smith acknowledges how what is desired and how that desire is developed carry ontological consequences for individuals, who become certain kinds of people based on what they long for and what they do about it. Taken together, I see these features as establishing a four-part definition of desire: (1) a heartfelt longing or yearning (2) for the fulfillment of an object persisting within the imagination (3) that emerges through and may incite embodied, habituated, social practice, (4) with consequences for who we are and will become. Compared to the multiple theories and disparate components of desire discussed in the previous section, I find that this definition offers a more coherent roadmap for an empirical study of desire by connecting the emotional experience of desiring to the practices and ontological dimensions of social activity. However, to it I would add Schroeder’s (2015) suggestion that we can have multiple and competing desires that variously hold our attention given the circumstances we find ourselves in socially and emotionally.

Also, the definition of desire I have elaborated through Smith’s framing hinges upon a situated view of learning and a notion of activity as object-directed, both of which could benefit from more robust theorization backed by empirical research. In the next section I thus turn to research in the learning sciences on sociocultural theory and activity theory. As I show, they can enrich the concept of desire further and offer additional conceptual tools—notably for understanding the object of desire as socially constructed and consequential for individuals—that can prove useful for investigating desire in teacher preparation.
A sociocultural framing of desire

As I read it, sociocultural theory dissolves firm distinctions between individuals and social conditions. Through its development, the theory has challenged the prevailing model of learning as acquisition and transfer (Sfard, 1998; Rogoff, 1997; Packer, 2001) giving way to conceptions of learning as social activity situated within communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), with that learning being undertaken in complex figured worlds (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998), profoundly influenced by history and culture (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003), and ultimately organized toward possible futures and identities (Cole, 1996; O’Connor & Allen, 2010; Polman & Miller, 2010). In formal educational settings, researchers have applied the theory to upend problematic views of students, teaching, and learning.

By treating individuals as situated within and constitutive of social conditions, the theory offers helpful tools for observing and interpreting how desire takes shape and is learned (see Appendix A for more on the theory as I came to understand it). In fact, I would point out that aspects of desire have been raised in the sociocultural literature. In the first paragraph of their seminal text, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) refer to the novice’s “intentions to learn” as a crucial first step in joining a community of practice (italics mine; p. 29). And Barbara Rogoff (1997) suggests that learning entails, in part, a person’s “changing purposes for being involved, commitment to the endeavor, and trust of unknown aspects of it (including its future)” (p. 280). As I read it, learning thus framed entails a degree of personal investment—or the necessary presence of a heartfelt commitment or desire to learn the knowledge and practices of a community.
Desire as preferable to motivation

It is possible to talk of such heartfelt commitment in terms of motivation rather than desire. Within cognitive psychology motivation is treated as something that resides squarely within individuals (cf., Stipek, 1993) to be altered through intrinsic or extrinsic means (cf., Ginsberg, 2005; Middleton, 1995). We therefore talk of “motivating” others or working to “motivate” ourselves. In their sociocultural take on student motivation, Robert Rueda and Luis Moll (1994) challenge this view and define motivation as situated in social interactions within specific cultural contexts. In this way certain contexts are deemed to be motivating, or more likely to result in desired activity. They note how this reframing permits a more dynamic understanding of student participation and its relationship to the (de)motivating conditions of classrooms.

Though Rueda & Moll’s reframing of the concept strikes me as an improvement, the concept of motivation is still arguably a concept of action concerned primarily with what people do and how intensely they want to do it. But we might ask why they would want to take action and how that wanting develops. This is what Dorothy Holland (1992) sought to understand in her investigation of college women’s pursuit of romance versus high status careers in science. In the study she refers to desire as a directive force that is not natural but cultural, something learned through social participation. Holland maintains that such learning is accomplished through social activity and engagement with cultural resources, and it serves to direct and discipline one’s thoughts and feelings in particular ways for particular purposes. For the women she studied this involved learning various discursive moves from peers to deflect unwanted attentions from some suitors while eliciting attentions from others. Holland observed how the resulting world of romance was formed and reinforced by the women’s behavior, with rules for participation and
penalties for violations. Living within this world directed the women toward particular outcomes and a particular vision of the good life. Through their participation in this world, the women came to forge an identity rooted in some desired futures but not others, with potentially harmful implications for their academic participation and professional opportunities (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990).

Holland’s decision to inquire into the women’s desire rather than their motivation is noteworthy in the depth of understanding it affords of her subjects’ choices and actions. By evoking romantic love—eros—she accessed a family of concepts that includes passion, love, and desire. Significantly, though, Holland did not treat romance as a factor affecting some inherent conception of motivation, but rather positioned romance as an organizing ideal giving shape and purpose to the women’s social activity and identities. This arguably allowed her to get at more of the nuance and complexity of why romance mattered within the community she was observing. Specifically, it enabled a richer picture of the teleological dimensions of the situated activity and the future-oriented, future-creating character of the women’s participation within a community—participation that contributed to their orienting toward a vision of romance rather than STEM careers. Although motivation could perhaps lead to a similar line of inquiry into social activity (cf., Roeser, Peck, & Nasir, 2006), the concept as it is typically used brings the baggage of an epistemic tradition—psychology—that has historically struggled to break the modernist tendency of presuming foundational origins of human activity in a way that misses the crucial role of telos as a driver of activity (Packer, 2000).

Desire in the subject-object dynamic of activity theory

I find Dorothy Holland’s study to be a helpful reminder that the objects of desire are worth inquiring into and elaborating if we care to understand who people are and what they do. I
entered into the study with some clues about what might be desired in teacher preparation programs though I wanted to remain open to the possibilities. I expected that a program, charged with preparing a certain kind of teacher capable of employing certain practices, would direct its beginning teachers toward specific objects, some of which would be more concrete (e.g., submitting assignments, passing performance evaluations) while others would be broader in scope (e.g., ending poverty through education) or perhaps broad in interpretation (e.g., becoming a good teacher). It also seems reasonable to assume that these objects, and desires for them, would compete with one another as well. And I was curious to understand how individuals within a program came to have desires and perhaps were changed or transformed by desiring certain objects. I therefore found it helpful to more richly define the concept of “object” and what it might mean to be a “desiring subject” working within a specific activity system.

To do this I turned to activity theory and specifically Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). Researchers building on Yrjö Engeström’s (1987) formulation of CHAT elaborate how individual subjects within a community coordinate their activity to achieve certain outcomes through the use of tools, rules, and the division of labor (Figure 2.2). The rules govern conduct and are imposed to define parameters within the system; the division of labor is how the subjects in the system divvy up or assign the tasks necessary to fulfill the object; and the tools in a system mediate a community’s construction and understanding of the object, and can be physical or conceptual (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). Changes in one of these components can create tension in the system that affects the capacity for the individuals participating within the activity to attain the object of it (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). In a teacher preparation setting, for example, we can imagine tension arising as new academic standards for elementary science (rule) render obsolete the curriculum in a methods course (tool), thus straining the course
The elementary science methods example also illustrates how the objects of activity can be instrumental in nature—clear and tangible goals to be achieved. Indeed, researchers using CHAT tend to limit their discussion of objects to “a horizon of possible goals and actions” that, once reached, “must be reconstructed by means of new intermediate goals and actions” (Engeström, 1999, p. 65). In other words, the activity tends to be treated as unidirectional or goal-oriented. This is arguably a consequence of studying communal activity, where it can be helpful to know how a community achieves some degree of consensus on what they are working toward and how they will know if they’ve got there. Even so, my reading of objects suggests that
they can be more complex as social constructions that can be partial, overlapping, multiple, and even competing, which presents interesting challenges for individuals, like beginning teachers, who must get a sense of what their professional community is trying to accomplish if they are to succeed (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999).

To get at such challenges faced by beginning teachers, I find it helpful to orient to the CHAT system from the perspective of the subject. Indeed, a core dynamic of the theory is the relationship between an individual participant—the subject—and an ideal product—the object—that the participant is trying to realize through his/her work (Engeström, 1987). Leont’ev (1978) contends that individuals establish purpose and direction by objectifying “those ideas that evoke, direct, and regulate” their activity (p. 18). By realizing those “ideas” through activity the world is thus changed; but the subject is changed as well. As such, within the CHAT framework I am most interested in subject-object dynamic and especially the experiences of the subjects as they engage with the objects in more affective and heartfelt ways. The other components in the system matter, but for the sake of examining desire in this study I have opted to limit the noise they would invite to keep the analysis focused on the objects as ideals that are variously imagined and desired by the subjects in a given system.

*Objects as imagined ideals*

The objects of activity within a community of practice are constructed and they exist for subjects as ideals within the imagination (Davydov, 1999). Careful observation of cultural activity in a social system reveals the objects that drive it, and individuals can thus be seen communicating their understanding of those objects—what they are and why they matter—through the common conceptual and practical tools of their community of practice (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). The resulting ideals serve an important function for educating
new members in a community. As Peter van Huizen, Bert van Oers, & Theo Wubbels (2005) explain,

> [f]rom the Vygotskian perspective, ideal forms are based on the central cultural meanings (values, goals) attached to the core activities in an activity system, for example schooling. Ideal forms may be available in documentary form such as educational paradigms, and/or may be exemplified and modeled to newcomers in the practice of an educational community and its members. Ideal forms have to be of such a nature that they may serve apprentices (and other participants) as not only criteria of competence, but also as objects of commitment. (p. 274)

Through a CHAT lens, a teacher preparation community can thus be seen working to sift through multiple and competing ideals to shape those that motivate their coordinated activity. This does not mean that the ideals are fixed or always interpreted in the same way by participants in the community. Indeed, there is likely to be negotiation, tension, and uncertainty as participants reconcile their own evolving understanding of the objects of activity with those of colleagues and the system writ large as a cultural and historical entity. In fact, Engeström & Sannino (2010) suggest that it is helpful to distinguish the generalized object developed in a given system over the course of its history from the specific object “as it appears to a particular subject, at a given moment, in a given action” (p. 6). The generalized object is likely to be broader in scope and interpretation. In the teaching concepts such as “education”, “practice”, and “learning” qualify as generalized objects with rich histories and cultural valences that continue to motivate activity in the schooling system. The same is true for “teacher” as an ideal form that distinguishes one role from a multitude of other professional roles a person could inhabit. The vagueness of these objects can be frustrating at times, leading administrators, researchers, and policy-makers to push
for conceptual clarity so teaching can be learned and assessed more easily. But the plasticity of such objects can be useful by holding the tension between multiple and often conflicting definitions so that social cohesion can be maintained among individuals collaborating within a profession to realize shared goals despite their differences (Star, 2010; Star & Griesemer, 1989).

Subjects as emotionally invested in the objects of activity

In an activity system subjects can thus be seen co-negotiating and co-constructing objects in their joint social activity. It is possible to interpret CHAT as also postulating that, in this co-negotiation and co-construction, subjects are themselves transformed. Indeed, too often the subject gets lost in systemic analyses, and Yrjö Engeström & Annalisa Sannino (2010) caution researchers against allowing the wide-angle lens afforded by CHAT to generate a diminished view of individual actors. Some researchers have sought to expand the view of the individual by drawing attention to subjects’ identity construction and their emotionality, especially the emotions associated with the object and how it is constructed and pursued. In this way the activity system can be seen as not only mediating subjects’ cognitive understanding but also their emotional understanding of the imagined ideals they are working to realize.

Wolff-Michael Roth and Yew-Jin Lee (2007) observe that researchers using CHAT tend to neglect to address emotions in their investigations of activity systems despite the central importance of emotions for the theory’s founders. They maintain that subjects’ motivations are tied to control of the object, with greater control resulting in more overt signs of “positive emotional valence” from individual actors (p. 214). They note that the positivity of being an active and valued contributor to the ideals of the community is often undervalued in educational settings where teachers and school leaders tend to judge students’ motivation against their preferred ideals. Van Huizen, van Oers, & Wubbels (2005) similarly argue that subjects’
emotions play a significant role in learning activity. In their view, emotions reflect “the quality of a person’s participation in activity in relation to that person’s needs and motives” (p. 273). Emotions can thus serve, in part, as indicators of alignment or fit between individuals and a given system. This treatment of emotion positions emotions both within individuals and between them, as aspects of social interaction and discursive engagement (Meanwell & Kleiner, 2014; Zembylas, 2003, 2005, 2007).4

Desiring subjects and seductive objects

References to subjects’ motives and emotional investment in certain objects suggest a specific emotion—desire—playing an important role in social activity. The fact that individuals yearn more or less for the objects of their activity is frequently neglected in the literature. A notable exception is Bonnie Nardi’s (2005) study of scientists working collaboratively within a biotech company. She argues that object construction is driven by specific desires that need to be understood to appreciate how a given object attains prominence as the motivator of collaborative work. Drawing on CHAT’s foundational theorists (i.e., Leont’ev and Vygotsky), she contends that these desires are “the very foundation of collaboration” and it is thus crucial to attend to not only how people conduct activity but why they choose to do that activity—the problems they aim to solve or the ideals towards which they labor (p. 37). She points out that much of the literature on activity is on the “tactical decisions” workers make with the resources available (p. 39). But without richer depictions of their underlying desires our understanding of their activity is incomplete. In other words, she proposes that individuals need to be seen as desiring subjects to fully appreciate the object and the work it motivates.

Nardi points out that an object may be motivating, but it can be desired for different reasons. Thus, she chose to distinguish the object from the motive, which are often combined
(e.g., Engeström, 1999), to account for the scientists’ three major motives—profit, curiosity, and humanitarianism—for pursuing a common object. These motives evoked emotion, and often the scientists used emotional language that “expressed an energizing capacity” when discussing their work (p. 44). Recognizing this, she observed how company leaders realized that they needed to align the researchers’ passions with their drive for profit if the endeavor was going to succeed. This put a lot of pressure on the mid-level managers who had to mediate the desires of the top brass and the scientists. Nardi noted how occasional disagreements arose and the scientists either gave in to management’s demands or initiated small side-projects that flew under the radar. She was especially interested in the humanitarian desire, which suggested a need to associate the daily grind of work with objects beyond the scope of the lab. Emotions may therefore reflect a felt connection between our activity and the society we hope it serves. She concludes that researchers using CHAT should see the objects of work less as ends than as compass directions pointing toward broader and more personally meaningful objectives. Doing so can help explain why individuals desire to fulfill more immediate goals.

Drawing on Karin Knorr Cetina (1997), Nardi acknowledges that objects of work can have a seductive quality, especially in knowledge-producing ventures where what comes to be known reveals what isn’t known, thereby driving further exploration. Borrowing from Lacan, Knorr Cetina writes that “wants are always directed at an empirical object mediated by representations—through signifiers, which identify the object and render it significant” (p. 13). At the same time, she observes that renderings of the object cannot fully capture it and end up revealing what is missing, which further stimulates a desire to fill in blanks. Likewise, defining an object frames borders, which can stimulate the imagination and incite a desire to see the space outside of the frame. Absences and mystery—a preoccupation with imagined terrain just over the
horizon; understanding the allure of the unknown future reveals how desire can captivate subjects within any system, not just in the sciences.

Rather than attending to the entire CHAT system, Nardi opts to orient our view to the subject-object dynamic to illuminate aspects of objects in light of subjects’ desires. Significantly, she takes seriously the subjects within the system as individuals who can desire more of their work than the production of goods and services. Her divorcing of individual motive—which she equates with desire—from the object that individuals are collectively pursuing within a given system permits her to describe and consider the character of different motives. Attending to desire also helped her to portray the object of activity from the subject perspective—the *specific* object (Engeström & Sannino, 2010)—as something constructed in a given time and place by individuals who may imagine and desire the object differently. The object is thus more multifaceted than it may appear if only viewed from a system-wide perspective.

I see parallels between Nardi’s use of CHAT and Smith’s model of how desires for imagined futures emerge through participation in communities (Figure 2.3). Though using different languages, they both treat individuals as embedded within specific social contexts in which resources—such as tools, norms, and practices—mediate communication and the co-construction of objects of desire. They also acknowledge the landscape of emotions in which such co-construction happens as individuals are not only rational, tactical decision-makers but also develop heartfelt attachments to the ideals and imagined futures that they aim to realize through their work. Smith helpfully adds in the notion that those objects come to occupy the individuals’ imaginations, thus permitting a desiring state of mind. And he contends that socially situated practice can serve to establish and orient the desire of community members toward a particular object. But I see Nardi and CHAT theorists complicating this assumption somewhat by...
allowing for the possibility of tension in the construction among community members as they
work to coordinate multiple, specific objects and desires through their social activity. This
helpfully allows for the possibility that subjects can desire the same object but desire it in
different ways or for different reasons. Likewise, it seems possible that objects in a community
can be in flux as subjects continue to co-construct and co-negotiate the objects of their activity
over time in light of changing conditions and demands. Missing from Smith and CHAT theory, I
would argue, is a conceptualization of how desire itself can vary as experienced by individuals.
As Schroeder (2009) pointed out, an individual can have multiple desires, some standing and
others occurring, and desire itself can be in flux for individuals as their moods vary and they
move across activity systems.

In my reading of them, Nardi, Holland, and Smith are all concerned with what it is that
people desire through their social activity, whether it's the joy of discovery, romance, or the good
life. For my study of teacher preparation this begs the question of what it is that beginning teachers’ desire or are expected and perhaps trained to desire through their preparation activity, and in the next section I refer to research that uses CHAT to define key objects of teacher preparation.

The desired objects of teacher preparation

As I discussed in the last chapter, teacher preparation is complicated by the multiple and competing values and ideals over what teaching is and should accomplish. Reformers within the profession can thus be seen as working to narrow the parameters for the sake of clarity and assessment of teacher quality. Such narrowing arguably generates preferred ideals and images of what it means to teach and be a teacher. Indeed, viewing preparation through a CHAT lens, Van Huizen, van Oers, & Wubbels (2005) observe how

[i]n teacher education, ideal forms may clarify the relationship between values and aims of school education, the professional image of the teachers serving these values and aims, their functions and tasks, and the competences that have to be learned to be effective in the professional role. (pp. 274-275)

The image(s) of the ideal teacher could thus direct beginning teachers to what it means to be a good teacher and what good teachers aim to accomplish through their work.

Establishing an ideal form of teaching for preparation purposes entails negotiation between those with a vested stake in its construction. Addressing the issue of beginners moving between the university and practicum settings, Pamela Grossman, Peter Smagorinsky, and Sheila Valencia (1999) describe how participants in a system of teacher preparation work to co-construct an image of the ideal teacher capable of achieving certain outcomes through a common conceptual language of instructional practice and exhibitions of that practice. They also observe
that participants’ beliefs about learning fuel the learning activity thereby establishing “specific images of what professional responsibilities entail or what it means to be a competent teacher” that can differ across settings and create problems for learners (p. 5). Significantly, they maintain that variations in belief systems often lead to “multiple conceptions of the ideal teacher and multiple environmental structures to guide career development toward those ideals (p. 5).”

Indeed, Van Huizen, van Oers, & Wubbels illuminate some of this variation by identifying three competing paradigms of reform in teacher education: competency-based, personal orientation to teaching, and reflection and inquiry. *Competency-based* teacher education prioritizes performance on a pre-established rubric of clearly delineated objectives and practices deemed necessary to master to become an effective teacher. Within this model, fulfillment of performance objectives takes precedence over demonstrations of knowledge of the underlying motives and values of teaching and education. By comparison, teacher education concerned with *personal orientations* constructs the teacher as a multifaceted individual with unique needs, capacities, beliefs, and experiences. These personal dimensions become the focus of preparation and are targeted for cultivation so they may translate into personally meaningful and therefore better instructional practice. The third teacher education paradigm emphasizes *reflection and inquiry* as key practices for beginners to try out and study practices to determine what works in the classroom. The teacher-researcher is thereby empowered to understand her teaching through a program of systematic investigation.

In many respects the different preparation models (e.g., competency-based, personal orientation, and reflection and inquiry) echo the teacher preparation reforms discussed in the last chapter. Some reformers would prefer that greater attention be paid to teachers’ *selves* with preparation supporting individuals as they work to orient personally held ideals and values to the
work of teaching and its moral and ethical demands (i.e., Alsup, 2006; Danielewicz, 2001). Those advocating for greater attention to practice (i.e., Ball & Forzani, 2009; Hiebert & Morris, 2012; Windschitl et al., 2012) would have beginners achieve a level of competence with certain instructional moves and professional dispositions before entering the classroom. This reform movement arguably contains features of the reflection and inquiry model depending on how beginners are expected to take up and come to understand certain teaching practices as they work toward competency (cf., Hiebert, Morris, & Glass, 2003; Hiebert, Morris, Berk, & Jansen, 2007).

In my study, I am less interested in the fit of any of the reforms thus mentioned into a given model than how the reforms construct an ideal form of teaching through their framing of pedagogy, or the teaching moves and practices and what they are supposed to achieve, with respect to ontology, or what it means to be and become a teacher. I would venture that each proposed approach to teacher preparation represents in part an effort by its advocates and designers to convey preferred instructional practices and what it takes to implement them, or the kind of person a teacher needs to be in terms of disposition and temperament. In fact, this tension between pedagogy and ontology suggests that the object of teacher preparation broadly speaking may be better seen as multiple objects, two of which I would call a pedagogical object and an ontological object. I do not think of these as mutually exclusive categories in the sense that it is possible to have one without the other. Indeed, a fundamental assumption of my study is that when we ask teachers to do certain things we ask them to become certain kinds of teachers and people, and vice versa. I thus draw the distinction between the objects for heuristic purposes to show more of the complexity involved in the construction of idealized images of good teaching within a given preparation program.
I find compelling reason to enrich the heuristic with a third object that I am calling a **generalized object of teaching** that acknowledges the possible presence of broader ideals or visions of society that teachers can desire to realize through their work. Nardi’s (2005) study of the scientists suggested that some of them were driven by a sense that their work served a greater humanitarian cause. It seems possible that teachers could similarly view their work as a way to realize a broader and perhaps more noble ideal. Indeed, Karen Hammerness (2006) observes that many people find teaching appealing because of a perception that it is morally justifiable, worthwhile work. She claims that those who choose teaching “aim to be successful, not only through their own students and making a difference in those children’s lives, but also (at least for some teachers) through improving society in some way” (p. 7). Hammerness suggests that the visions beginning teachers have of their work fall along a continuum from the narrow and immediate demands of daily practice to the far-reaching and expansive ideals of what teaching is and can accomplish. In unpacking the visions of beginning teachers she showed that a challenge the beginners faced was finding a satisfying degree of coherence between the immediate and expansive dimensions of their work.

Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia (1999) view these challenges as a matter of coordinating and prioritizing motives, which preparation programs may help to facilitate for beginners. They note how “[a]ctivity settings encourage particular social practices that presumably participants will come to see as worthwhile means to a better future” (p. 6). They add that a “sense of purpose” tends to drive social activity, and a challenge faced by teacher preparation programs is establishing an “overriding motive” among many possible motives that narrows the focus and “provides channels that encourage and discourage particular ways of thinking and acting” (p. 7). In some respects Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia seem to be
highlighting a tension between the *specific* object and the *generalized* object (Engeström & Sannino, 2010) as preparation programs scaffold ways for their beginning teachers to align their individual perspectives on the ideal form of teaching to an enduring vision of teaching as a cultural and historical artifact of the preparation community. Doing so paradoxically narrows the beginners’ focus even while enlarging the scope or breadth of teaching and the significance of being a teacher. For example, a preparation program may direct beginners’ attention to an ideal of teaching as altruistic, a selfless endeavor done for the sake of children and communities, and thus winnow out other motives for teaching, such as teaching for personal recognition or to gain more lucrative professional opportunities. The ideal offered is therefore generalized enough that it is hard to refute and everyone can access and hopefully support it. But it offers some parameters for justifying the centrality of certain instructional practices and professional ways of being.

As I use it, the generalized object of teaching is a way of making visible the broader ideals and purposes of teaching within a preparation program that may be desired by its beginning teachers. There could be multiple or competing generalized objects of teaching just as with the pedagogical and ontological objects. Also, I assume that the three objects I have defined are intertwined and not mutually exclusive, and there may be other objects or ways of formulating the objects that I have left out of my heuristic. Again, I have opted to break apart the object of preparation activity to offer a varied and hopefully richer view of the ideals that programs are conveying to beginning teachers. Significantly for the purposes of my study, with more than one object it thus becomes possible to see the desires of beginning teachers as multiple and in tension.
A heartfelt investment in the objects of teacher preparation

Though Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia indicate that motives matter and can be multiple and in tension within a preparation program, the role of motive as it relates to the notion of appropriation could use further elaboration through the conceptual tools of desire. They define appropriation as “the process through which a person adopts the pedagogical tools available for use in particular social environments (e.g., schools, pre-service programs) and through this process internalizes ways of thinking endemic to specific cultural practices (e.g., using phonics to teach reading)” (p. 15). They describe a spectrum of appropriation observable in teacher education contexts from lack of appropriation at one end; followed by more superficial forms of appropriation as a beginner takes on the label of teacher; with conceptual appropriation emerging as a beginner gains experience and comes to fully inhabit the role of teacher and its languages, rules, and commitments. They go on to point out that the preparation setting, including “imagined outcomes, relationships among participants, underlying philosophies of a program, and kinds of activities,” can impact a beginner’s capacity to effectively appropriate systemic resources and achieve programmatic ideals (p. 19).

The spectrum of appropriation helpfully makes visible how beginning teachers come to inhabit or contest the pedagogical and ontological ideals of their teacher preparation program through tool use. The middle-level of their scheme reveals how it is possible for a beginning teacher to use certain tools without fully internalizing what it means to be a teacher or enact a particular practice. However, we might ask whether in such circumstances the beginner’s way of thinking about their work and role is all that’s at stake. Indeed, what I find missing in the conceptualization of appropriation is the possibility that a beginner might be internalizing not only a way of thinking but also a desire for the objects of preparation and teaching through using
certain practices and concepts. Likewise, it may be that a desire for an object, perhaps a vision of what teaching should accomplish not compatible with a program’s vision, may lead beginner to resist appropriating certain tools. Indeed, it seems reasonable to assume that a beginning teacher might demonstrate a rich understanding of an instructional tool by applying and justifying it effectively, yet lack sufficient desire for the tool’s broader aims such that it stays in their repertoire beyond preparation. This may be framed as a difference between achieving mastery of a tool versus appropriating it in the sense of taking on an identity through tool use (Wertsch, 1998), a distinction that can help explain resistance to certain tools (Polman, 2006). Along similar lines, attending to desire highlights how a beginning teacher’s poor appropriation of a tool could signal a lack of desire. It also allows for the possibility that a beginner strongly desires to use the tool and realize its potential and is struggling to take it up, perhaps because of poor mentor modeling. Mistaking the latter for the former could lead the teacher educator(s) to misdiagnose the underlying problem in a beginner’s failure to appropriate a program’s preferred tool.

The concept of appropriation could therefore benefit from a companion concept that affords greater analytic access to the subject’s heart. I contend that desire can serve this purpose. But in the same way that appropriation hinges on the notion of increasing *internalization*, or the bringing into one’s self particular cognitive understandings, I find that desire could benefit from an intermediary concept to talk about how the subjects’ hearts forge emotional, affective attachments to the objects of their activity. From Smith (2009, 2013), I borrowed the notion of *heartfelt* as the capacity for something to grab ahold of one’s heart in a way that it persists in the imagination and thus emerges as something we might desire—to long to acquire, realize, or fulfill. As the heart is grabbed by something, we could say that it becomes more invested in that
thing as emotional energy is expended in desiring it. I thus propose the notion of a *heartfelt investment* that operates along a continuum from a relative lack of investment to a partial investment and then a full investment. Studies by Holland and Nardi suggest that it is possible to get some sense of the “directive force” (Holland) or “energizing capacity” (Nardi) through attending to how people talk about their experiences within a given social system. As such, I look for discursive signs of subjects’ investing their hearts in the objects of teacher preparation activity, which may offer clues to their desire for such objects.

Though analytically helpful for conceptualizing subjects as situated in particular social and material settings with their activity oriented toward realizing particular objects, I find that CHAT does not specify a clear mechanism for how subjects shape and develop attachments to the objects of activity through their participation. Indeed, there is an antiseptic quality in talking of subjects constructing objects that doesn’t fully capture what is happening as individuals in a community interact and invest their hearts in those objects. I therefore turn to a theory of narrative and storytelling.

*Establishing and orienting toward desired objects through narrative*

A theory of narrative and storytelling has been used to represent teachers’ stories of their work and its challenges (cf., Clandinin, Connelly, & Craig, 1995; Craig, 2014), but I use the theory as a way of understanding how individuals within a community convey desire and orient their hearts toward particular objects of activity.

*Story and narrative as a way of co-constructing reality*

A number of researchers have established that we construct the world and our selves through narrative (Bruner, 1991, 2004; Hardy, 1975; Doecke, Brown, & Loughran, 2000; Taylor, 2002). Referring to this body of work, Jerome Bruner (1991) contends that narrative is “an
instrument of the mind in the construction of reality” (p. 6). Brenton Doecke, Jenny Brown, & John Loughran (2000) likewise argue that narratives aren’t exact representations of reality but tools with which we communicate and interpret the world and our experiences in it. They suggest that attending to narrative makes visible “constructions or interpretations that open up new dimensions, new ways of seeing and understanding” for the narrator and researcher (p. 347).

Carol Witherell and Nel Noddings (1991) suggest that stories and narrative attach us to others and to our own histories by providing a tapestry rich with threads of time, place, character, and even advice on what we might do with our lives. The story fabric offers images, myths, and metaphors that are morally resonant and contribute both to our knowing and our being known. (p. 1)

Stories thus bridge past and future: what we have done and what we might do; who we were with whom we might become.

Barbara Hardy (1975) maintains that our inclination for narrative is a common feature of our humanity reflecting our desire for connection, and we learn early on how to join into another’s being by joining into her or his story. By doing so we use our imaginations to make sense of the motion of life between points past and future, actual and possible, thereby establishing various trajectories of being (Cole, 1996; Polman & Miller, 2010). This used to be done through telling myths, and though our mythic imagination may have waned in modern times (Armstrong, 2010), we persist in concocting stories to communicate our ideals. Sharing stories nourishes hope for seemingly impossible futures (Simon, 1992).

**Orienting narratives that direct desire**

As “orienting narratives,” Smith (2013) suggests that our stories are rarely communicated in a conventional storytelling format with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Rather they are
taken up in pieces as we engage in a multitude of daily discursive “microperformances” that enjoin us to a larger story of what matters in a given setting (p. 110). Smith also observes that we inhabit and perform scripts and through their repeated enacting the conceptual contents within them “capture our hearts and imaginations by ‘lining’ our imagination, as it were—providing us with frameworks of ‘meaning’ by which we make sense of our world and our calling in it” (Smith, 2009, p. 68).

Smith goes on to contend that those stories, as orienting narratives, communicate non-cognitive, emotional meaning that serves to shape our desires. He observes that this happens through the embodied nature of story, and he calls upon Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu to articulate a connection between our embodied experiences and tendency to frame those experiences narratively. Stories, he claims, communicate on a register that reflects more of our whole being. They touch the heart and tether it to the world. Smith explains how,

[t]he imaginative logic of poesis plucks our deepest heartstrings, and such aesthetic resonances reverberate in deep corners of our unconscious, attuning us in ways we are not even aware of. We’re less convinced by arguments than moved by stories; our being-in-the-world is more aesthetic than deductive, better captured by narrative than analysis. (italics in original, p. 108)

As a result,

[a] whole world(veiw) can be compressed in even the most minimal narrative because the story is ‘working’ aesthetically—it means in its cadence and rhythm, in what is said and left unsaid, in its tensions and resolutions. I “understand” a story in ways I don’t know. (italics in original, p. 109)
The elevation of story over argument isn’t to say that arguments cannot or do not move us; it’s just that they often do so tacitly through the stories we tell. According to Charles Taylor (2002), a theory of liberal capitalism informs the 21st century’s dominant storyline, though most people understand it less in abstract theoretical ways than in gut level ways conveyed by popular stories. Drawing on Taylor, Smith (2009) suggests that the resulting imaginary produces a common narrative of the good life that we enact through our daily activity.

In teaching and teacher preparation, a narrative view seems likely to reveal how beginning teachers navigate the orienting narratives of their work environments. Cheryl Craig (2014) argues that such a view honors teachers’ perspectives and “is sensitive to the roles and stories given to teachers by policy makers, administrators and the public-at-large as well as the narratives teachers live and tell, and re-live and re-tell, of their own accord” (p. 84). As I use it, a theory of narrative and storytelling offers some purchase in understanding how orienting narratives within a teacher preparation program are established and serve to direct beginning teachers to the desired objects of preparation—i.e., the generalized object of teaching, pedagogical object, and ontological object.

_A conceptual model and research questions for investigating desire_

As discussed in this chapter, Smith’s (2009, 2013) work, coupled with empirically grounded features of sociocultural theory and activity theory, provide a theoretical basis for desire. I view sociocultural theory and Holland’s (1992) study especially as bolstering Smith’s theoretical argument that desire is socially situated and participatory. Likewise, there is overlap between how activity theorists frame the object of activity and Smith’s contention that the objects of desire are imagined ideals, constructed within tension between the experiences of the present and possibilities for the future. Nardi’s (2005) use of CHAT to centralize and make
visible the subject-object dynamic helpfully illuminates how subjects can be viewed as desiring beings who understand the objects of their activity on an emotional, non-cognitive level.

The literature also offers several conceptual tools that, taken together, offer me a way to inquire into desire in social activity like that of a teacher preparation program (Figure 2.4). To locate and unpack desire it may be helpful to get at the objects—which aren’t so much things as state of affairs (Schroeder, 2015)—that seem to be persisting in the minds of individuals and grabbing ahold of their hearts or repelling them. Evidence of that persistence could be in indications of what individuals find (dis)pleasurable, (de)motivating, or (un)rewarding (Schroeder, 2004). Likewise, I have proposed the notion of a heartfelt investment to consider how individuals may have or be forming affective, emotional connections to the objects of activity in ways that could indicate a desire for those objects. And within teacher preparation settings designed with certain purposes and ideals in mind (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999; van Huizen, van Oers, & Wubbels, 2005), there are likely to be certain objects that take precedence, conveyed to initiates in part through orienting narratives (Smith, 2013), or comments that collectively serve to direct the heart toward preferred objects. Indeed, I find it helpful to think of those narratives as foregrounding certain objects in the imagination to incite a persistent and nagging desire, an occurrent desire as opposed to a standing desire that stays latent (Schroeder, 2015), to fulfill them. I also find it helpful to view the objects in a teacher preparation environment as multiple and likely to include the following: 1) what is desired of instructional practice (pedagogical object); 2) how one is expected to be as a teacher (ontological object); and 3) a broader and more enduring vision of what teaching is and should accomplish in a society (generalized object of teaching).
With this framework to guide me, I want to better understand the concept of desire through empirical analysis as well as use it to examine teacher preparation. As noted, I assume that a given teacher preparation program will have certain objects that could be desired by beginning teachers and that these objects are conveyed in part through *orienting narratives* that I want to tease out. Given their professional status and authority, I expect program leaders to be the ones conveying those narratives to the beginners. I am also seeking to understand how the beginning teachers might be co-negotiating those narratives as they consider how much to invest their hearts in the objects. Indeed, a fundamental assumption I make is that humans not only make sense of things but also come to desire those things. I therefore want to know if the beginners appear to desire what it seems they are supposed to desire. But I also want to extend the inquiry to compare desires within a program. Do the beginners’ desires look the same, or...
convey the same intensity? Do beginners construe objects differently and thus desire them differently? Or do they desire certain objects with equal intensity but interpret those objects differently? Finally, I want highlight notable similarities and differences between programs. To achieve these aims I am therefore looking to address the following research questions in my study:

1. What objects are rendered desirable through the orienting narratives evident in a given teacher preparation program? Specifically, what are the generalized objects of teaching, the pedagogical objects (what beginning teachers should want to do), and the ontological objects (the ways a beginning teacher should want to be)?

2. In what ways do beginning teachers appear to be investing their hearts in the desired objects framed within the orienting narratives of their preparation program?

3. What evidence is there of multiple and competing objects of desire within a teacher preparation program?

4. How do the orienting narratives and objects of desire compare between preparation programs?

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1 Martha Nussbaum (1990) observes how the ancient Greek philosophers, most notably Plato, recognized both the presence and power of the internal calculation of desire and sought to formalize the outcome variable—a unit of pleasure—that would permit more rigorous comparisons between various human activities. It was hoped that a logically derived quantification of desire would reveal how some desires were more worthwhile than others. Nussbaum notes how Plato came to see this reductive effort as futile given the complexity of human activity and emotion; life has a way of bucking attempts to control the pursuit of happiness. Indeed, desirable and undesirable outcomes tend to exist in relationship to one another. Pleasure and pain, moral and immoral, happiness and sadness: it is difficult to know one without knowledge of the other. Finding pleasure, happiness, or morality requires a certain amount of inevitable stumbling and adaptation, which makes defining them in any firm or lasting sense impossible. Accepting this, as Plato did, guides desire out of the clouds of logic to the firmer, messier ground of everyday life. As Nussbaum explains, “Grief and passionate love return in their humanly recognizable form, and the best human life becomes one that is not free of certain ordinary risks and tensions” (p. 122).

2 Many in the scientific community are likely to support Schroeder’s position. In a recent discussion of the science of consciousness the distinguished biologist E.O. Wilson (2014) boldly declares, “I don’t believe it too harsh to state that the history of philosophy when boiled down consists mainly of failed models of the brain” (p. 49). Wilson does not fault humans for applying their interpretive capacity in service of understanding that capacity. In fact, it may hold crucial clues for discerning the biological basis of our sense of being. According to Wilson, “Conscious mental
life … is a constant review of stories experienced in the past and competing stories invented for the future” (p. 51). Understanding consciousness therefore requires an understanding of the biological underpinnings of our propensity to tell stories.

3 Smith (2009) tends to use “practice” and “ritual” interchangeably, which reflects his definition of practices as having a ritualizing effect on the practitioner. In fact, he insists that a clear demarcation between rituals and practices gives a false impression that everyday or more secular practices lack the capacity to inform and direct the heart. I share Smith’s assumption for the sake of my argument that teaching practices and the ways they are learned ritualize the practitioner toward ideals and futures. But I recognize that others may find value in maintaining the distinction, particularly for the sake of understanding how particular communities ascribe ritual status to certain practices (Bell, 1997).

4 As John Dirkx (2008) observes, there is a long history of research on the role of emotions in education and learning; I have merely scratched the surface here in the interest of maintaining focus on CHAT and desire. Generally I assume as Dirkx (2006b) does that teachers should interpret their emotions as signals cluing them into what matters to them in their work. I agree with Dirkx, that teachers’ emotions still warrant more attention than they are given. Though I join James K.A. Smith in pointing out that a specific emotion—desire—has especially been neglected.

5 Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia (2009) make a distinction between conceptual tools, defined as “principles, frameworks, and ideas about teaching, learning, and [disciplinary] acquisition that teachers use as heuristics to guide decisions about teaching and learning,” and practical tools, defined as the “classroom practices, strategies, and resources that do not serve as broad conceptions to guide an array of decisions but, instead, have more local and immediate utility” (p. 14). For educational researchers, then, the question is how these tools are used or appropriated by teachers such that they come to shape and organize a teacher’s way of thinking and responding to classroom demands.

6 Indeed, researchers of teacher education have argued that the most successful preparation programs offer a clear and uniform overarching vision of good teaching that anchors the theories and practices presented to beginning teachers (Goodlad, 1991; Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, with Grossman, Rust, & Shulman).

7 E.O. Wilson (2014) observes that biological and anthropological research has converged to explain our propensity for stories. As he states, “Our minds consist of storytelling. In each instant a flood of information flows into our senses, more than the brain can process. To augment the fraction of this information, we summon the stories of past events for context and meaning. We compare the past and the present and apply the decisions that were made previously, variously right or wrong. Then we look forward, creating—not just recalling this time—multiple competing scenarios. These are weighed against one another by the suppressing or intensifying effect imposed by aroused emotional centers (p. 51).”

8 Taylor (2002) refers to these prevailing storylines in terms of a social imaginary. Defending his conceptual choice, he explains, “I speak of imaginary because I’m talking about the way ordinary people ‘imagine’ their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms; it is carried in images, stories, and legends” (italics in original, p. 106).
Chapter 3: Study Methods

In this chapter I describe my methodological choices and the approaches that I used to inquire into desire within two teacher preparation programs. Broadly my study had two aims. The first was to further understand and develop a conceptual framework for empirical investigation of desire in learning activities. To do so, I first reviewed pertinent literature to identify key concepts and propose an initial framework. Then, as I spent time within my field sites observing program activities, visiting elementary schools, and interviewing beginning teachers, I reflected on where the hearts of participants might be visible and desire might be showing its hand. Analyzing my data, I came to find certain conceptual features of desire from the literature more useful for making sense of what I was seeing. That led me to my second aim, which was to consider how desire itself could be situated within the landscape of teacher preparation activity and perhaps useful for understanding dimensions of preparation that I conjectured were often overlooked. To accomplish this I refined my conceptual lens through iterative stages of analysis, memos, and through writing my findings chapters.

These aims reflect my overarching question for the study, which was: What is desire and how might it be operating within teacher preparation? From my conceptual framework I developed four more pointed questions:

1. What objects are rendered desirable through the orienting narratives evident in a given teacher preparation program? Specifically, what are the generalized objects of teaching, the pedagogical objects (what beginning teachers should want to do), and the ontological objects (the ways a beginning teacher should want to be)?

2. In what ways do beginning teachers, as desiring beings, appear to be investing their hearts in the desired objects framed within the orienting narratives of their preparation program?

3. What evidence is there of multiple and competing objects of desire within a teacher preparation program?
4. *How do the orienting narratives and objects of desire compare between preparation programs?*

Within this chapter I lay out how I worked to address these research questions through a study designed using a qualitative methodology that offered analytic tools for understanding desire while I was immersed within programs of teacher preparation and the emerging professional lives of beginning teachers.

**Methodological choices**

As I have theorized desire, it emerges socially and individuals experience it as they interact with one another and the features of a given setting. My unit of analysis was activity and specifically the comments made during the interactions between individuals and their programs’ orienting narratives and objects. In particular, I was looking for tensions (or a lack thereof) between individuals and those objects. I worked to examine desire from a number of vantage points, and in designing my qualitative study I made several key methodological choices that I preview here and elaborate in greater detail later in the chapter.

The first choice I made was to examine more than one teacher preparation program and to choose two programs that were similar in some ways but different in their practices and philosophies. Consistent with qualitative methodology (Eisenhardt, 1989; Erickson, 1986), I did this in part to offer multiple and contrasting perspectives for making interpretations as I built my conceptual understanding of desire. But I also wanted to provide readers with the opportunity to use the lens of desire to see teacher preparation in a novel way. With different programs I hoped to sharpen the contrasts to reveal how desires influence one’s impressions and preferences for what teachers should be prepared to do and achieve.
Another methodological choice that I made was to follow several beginning teachers at each program site. I did this to afford more personal perspectives on what I was observing. While observing the programs writ large, I did not want to lose sight of the beginning teachers as individual, desiring beings with unique histories and cultural experiences. I also wanted to understand the beginners’ experiences in the program as they moved between programmatic settings and classroom settings. I worked to strike a balance between having too many and too few beginners. During analysis, the multiplicity of voices afforded conceptual richness, but the cost was less richness and depth of individual narratives.

An admitted limitation in my study was that I did not interview program leaders, instructors, mentor teachers, or other non-beginners within the program communities. This choice mostly reflected my limited time and resources. In hindsight, I should have reduced the number of beginning teachers whom I interviewed and invited at least the program directors and main instructors to be interviewed. Their voices are present in the activities that I observed, though their personal interpretations are regrettably missing.

**Methodological framework**

As noted, in the study I sought to understand desire within teacher preparation programs while also developing the concept further based on careful observation and analysis. I did not set out to discover something new. Rather, I wanted to do as Howard Becker (1984) suggests and establish “a deeper understanding of things that many people are already pretty much aware of” (p. x). In the first and second chapters I presented an argument for why desire matters and revealed its conceptual contours. But I undertook this study presuming that people are familiar with desire as embodied beings who yearn for things and participate within a cultural milieu of music, films, books, and a whole range of tools that convey and incite desire. My task was to
make this desire visible, and to do so in an unconventional setting where its visibility might be hidden (Logue, 2012). To do this I adopted a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 1995; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2003; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006), which afforded me several advantages for fulfilling the aims of my study.

First, a constructivist grounded theory approach permitted me access to the ways in which desire might be present in moments of activity given its usefulness for discerning concepts that are consequential for individuals but are often taken for granted (Charmaz, 1995). To get at these concepts, in situ, I worked “to capture the worlds of people by describing their situations, thoughts, feelings, and actions and by relying on portraying the research participants’ lives and voices” (Charmaz, 1995, p. 30). Not entirely sure of what to expect, I was prepared to listen for “folk terms” (Becker, 1978) imbued with special meaning for participants.

Second, the methodology encouraged me to build my conceptual understanding from within the social and material contexts of my research sites. The emphasis on grounded in the sense that Charmaz (1995) uses it is not meant to imply that theorizing happens inductively and the data contains truth to be discovered. Rather, it asks the researcher to “take a reflexive stance on modes of knowing and representing studied life” by engaging in careful and iterative examination of the worlds and participants under investigation (p. 206). I thus viewed myself as a participant-observer (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) who interacted with the study subjects but maintained the researcher role. This required immersion in the programs to decrease my distance between the participants and myself so I could get at how the subjects’ experienced their preparation programs on an affective and emotional level. The months I spent at each program gave me time to build relationships with the participants so they might allow me greater insight into their emotional experiences with becoming a teacher. Also, I needed time for my own non-
cognitive impressions to evolve. I did not want to make snap-judgments or allow feelings of attraction or repulsion to programmatic features to overly saturate my interpretations.

Third, as with other qualitative approaches, the methodology allowed me to engage in analysis during data collection to refine my conceptual understanding of desire over the course of the study (Becker, 2008; Eisenhardt, 1989; Maxwell, 2005). I worked to remain close to the data while pondering the sensitizing concepts and preconceived ideas that I brought into the study. Indeed, I started data collection primed to attend to certain aspects of desire, notably those from Schroeder’s (2004) three-part conception of desire as involving pleasure, motivation, and reward. As the study unfolded, however, I treated these conceptual ideas as “points of departure” for my inquiry into a concept that I sought to develop more richly through careful observation and probing analysis of the data (Charmaz, 1995, p. 32).

Finally, the methodology encouraged me to see myself as situated within the contexts as a co-constructing agent. I considered myself a kind of participant whose presence potentially affected the settings and could influence what was observed (Charmaz, 1995, 2007; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2003; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2003). Rather than denying my subjectivity, I sought to keep it visible so I could appreciate its influence on my thinking and decision-making (Peshkin, 1988). Over the course of the study I therefore kept a personal journal to document my thoughts and reactions, often making entries directly after leaving a visit to a field site. These entries brought to light certain impressions and interpretations that I could then check through questions posed to participants sometimes while at the field sites though usually during interviews.

In line with my methodology I used qualitative data collection methods that included observational field notes, video/audio recording of program seminars and courses, semi-
structured interviews, and some artifact collection. I explain my use of these methods in greater detail later in the chapter.

**Research sites and participants**

The two teacher preparation programs where I conducted my study were both located in a major metropolitan area in the western U.S. The first program was City Teacher Prep (CTP), which partnered with a large urban district to prepare K-12 teachers to succeed within the current accountability climate and to raise student achievement in its low performing schools. The second program was a Montessori teacher training program (MONT), which prepared elementary teachers in the child-centered philosophy and method established a century ago by Maria Montessori.

**Program selection procedure**

Choosing teacher preparation programs required deciding which features were more salient for my study. Initially, I set out to study programs that exemplified current manifestations of practice-based teacher education reform. When it proved difficult to find two such programs accessible within the limits of my time and budget, I expanded my search criteria beyond practice to consider a program’s educational philosophy and ideals. I conjectured that it should be possible to find programs with philosophical differences given my experiences as a teacher within a variety of public and private schools as well as my understanding of curricular traditions (Liston & Zeichner, 1991) and the persistent tension in the U.S. between competing educational philosophies (Cuban, 2009; Labaree, 2010; Lagemann, 1989). This led me to seek out two programs that had enough features in common to limit some variables for the sake of

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1 Pseudonyms are used for all programs, schools, and participants.

2 Also, my first child was born on June 19, 2014, and I needed to balance data collection with being a father and attentive partner.

Chapter 3
comparison, though I needed to have good reason to believe that I would find differences in orienting narratives and objects of activity (i.e., generalized object of teaching, pedagogical object, and ontological object).

To aid my search I examined program websites to get a sense of vision, history, structure, and requirements. MONT in particular stood out given literature suggesting that Montessori teacher training is guided by a clear educational vision and ritualizes initiates to fulfill this vision through practice of the Montessori method of instruction (Cossentino, 2005, 2009). I was less clear if CTP was similarly driven by a guiding vision, but it appeared to embrace data-driven instructional reforms (cf., Hamilton et al., 2009) that I suspected might clash with Montessori’s version of progressive teaching. Significantly, CTP and MONT had several things in common: they were both alternatives to university-based programs, lasted one year, required beginners to have bachelor’s degrees, and had residency components.

A final note: CTP prepared elementary and secondary licensures candidates, but MONT only prepared elementary teachers. I thus limited the study mostly to elementary teacher preparation, especially in my selection of focal beginners (discussed later in the chapter). But at CTP the secondary candidates were often intermingled with the elementary candidates during the weekly seminar that I attended and it was not always possible to focus exclusively on the elementary candidates.

Gaining access to the sites

I took a number of steps to gain access to the teacher preparation programs and participants therein. To communicate my intentions, I prepared an executive summary of my study proposal that I sent when contacting program directors. For CTP, I met with the director (Mary) to discuss the program and my study. She approved it and then sent an email informing
the seminar instructors and beginning teachers of my intentions. On my first visit to the program’s weekly seminar I introduced my study to the beginners and instructors and then handed out my consent form for them to look over and return at their convenience. It took a while for me to get consent forms back from the 73 beginners, which is why I did not start recording video until my sixth visit to the weekly seminar.

For MONT, Dan Liston put me in contact with the director (Jill), whom I met with at the program’s training facility. She introduced me to Nancy, the coordinator of the lower elementary (1-3 grade) program, who sent out an email to the course instructors with my executive summary attached and an invitation to contact me with any questions. When I arrived on the first day of the summer training session, Jill introduced me to the cohort of beginning teachers and I informed them of my study. Like at CTP, I handed out my consent form for them to read and sign at their convenience. For each new course that started over the summer I introduced myself to the instructor and sought consent to observe and video record their course sessions. At both sites I checked in with instructors frequently to make sure that my video recording and presence in general was not an issue. In what follows I describe the two sites based on my observations of some of the program activity and on program literature provided by the directors.

**Site #1: City Teacher Prep**

City Teacher Prep (CTP) was created in close partnership with a large urban public district to improve the teaching quality within the district’s most challenging schools. The program offered its participants a way to earn either an elementary or secondary teaching license, as well as license paths for a special education and for a Spanish language endorsement. It also provided a small stipend and paid for a Master’s in education from a local university, though only if participants taught for four years in the partner district.
The CTP community was made up of many people serving several different roles. Overseeing CTP was Mary, the program director (Figure 3.1). There were also four instructors—Jason, Lauren, Kyle, and Susan—who taught the program’s weekly seminar. All four had been teachers in the district. (Lauren had also been an assistant principal.) In addition to teaching the weekly seminar these instructors served as field site supervisors and were responsible for assessing the teaching quality of a subgroup of 15-20 beginners. The broader CTP community included university instructors, building coordinators, district specialists, as well as district and school administrators. The specialists and administrators often attended the program’s weekly seminar as visiting instructors.

Participants

The CTP community was made up of many people serving several different roles.
From hundreds of applicants, program leaders selected the cohort of beginning teachers that I observed (n=73), which was made up of both elementary (n=50) and secondary licensure candidates (n=23). As mentioned, the candidates were often intermingled during the weekly seminar. I thus invited the full cohort to participate in the study even though I worked to focus my attention on the elementary beginners.

**Program components**

Broadly, the program entailed two components (Figure 3.2). The first was an academic regimen that included Master’s courses on urban education, literacy, math, educational psychology and meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Beginners took four courses during each of the academic quarters (summer, fall, winter, spring), one of which was the weekly seminar described below. Except for the seminar, which was all day on Thursdays, the beginners took the courses on nights and weekends.

The second component of the program was a residency, which required beginners to spend a full school year in a classroom. During the residency, CTP beginners were expected to show growth in their teaching as measured on the partner district’s teacher performance instrument. The beginners developed lessons and conducted video analyses of their teaching to show progress on criteria from that instrument. These tasks prepared them for three major solo teaching events: 1) three consecutive days in late September; 2) two weeks in late October; and 3) three weeks in April. During these events instructors, mentor teachers, building coordinators, and other teachers in their host school formally observed and assessed the beginners on the quality of their instruction. After solo teaching events these observers met as a team with the beginning teacher to debrief the experience. Teaching evaluations carried high-stakes implications. They contributed to the beginners’ grade for the weekly seminar. Low performers
CTP’s weekly seminar was a graduate level course taken over four quarters by the beginning teachers between June 2013 and July 2014. The seminar started mid-August, though I started observing it on October 3rd and attended all seminars through the last one on May 15th. Though I observed many intriguing discussions during the weekly seminar, the few key discussions summarized here are those that stood out during my analysis.

### Calendar of data collection and notable events/themes from the weekly seminar at City Teacher Prep (CTP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Began</th>
<th>The Weekly Seminar Starts</th>
<th>First Seminar Observed</th>
<th>Two-Week Solo Teach Event</th>
<th>1st Round of Interviews for Study</th>
<th>Winter Break</th>
<th>2nd Round of Interviews for Study</th>
<th>Three-Week Solo Teach Event</th>
<th>3rd Round of Interviews for Study</th>
<th>Program Ended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tracking student data</td>
<td>Mid-year reflection</td>
<td>Prep for job interviewing</td>
<td>Data literacy Prep for starting teaching in the fall</td>
<td>Data Collection at CTP Ended</td>
<td></td>
<td>July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Backward lesson design</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment &amp; feedback workshops</td>
<td>Peer review of classroom videos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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**October 17, 2013**

*“Temperature Check” on Stress Level*

At the start of seminar, Jason (instructor) invited the beginners to share their feelings. Kelsey recalled crying at her school, “I was tired and confused”, she explained. “I wasn’t expecting to get so emotional” [CTP-seminar-101713]. Jason responded, “I just know that there will be a day when you all smile at the same time.” Kelsey replied, “July third” (last day of the program). Others agreed. Jason cautioned them against longing to finish the program and told them to focus on the good moments in the classroom.

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**December 5, 2013**

*Discussion on Confidence/Comfort*

During a seminar where the beginners were invited to reflect on their experiences thus far, Lauren (instructor) provoked them into a discussion about their evolving confidence and comfort as new teachers. Some beginners embraced her warning to not get cocky while others worried that they weren’t cocky and were behind their peers in adopting a viable “teaching skin” and making progress as a new teacher.

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**October 24, 2013**

*“Temperature Check” on Two-week Solo Teach*

At the start of seminar, Kyle (instructor) invited the beginners to consider the two-week solo teach and share what about it made them anxious or excited. One beginner expressed concern about being observed by her principal. Another worried that her mentor wouldn’t get lesson plans to her in a timely fashion. Kyle then asked what they were excited about. Beginners mentioned looking forward to having more authority/control in the classroom. One beginner wanted structure, and another wanted to find her “teacher voice”.

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**January 9, 2014**

*“Looking Forward” to the Spring*

After winter break, with a new quarter getting underway, Jason (instructor) asked a group of beginners what they enjoyed about break and what they were looking forward to in the spring. Several beginners mentioned liking the chance to sleep, do nothing, and spend time with family. Generally, they looked forward to one of two things: 1) finding out what school they’ll be at next year; 2) trying out new things in the classroom.

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**February 20, 2014**

*The Principal Panel on How to Interview*

For several weeks in the winter the beginners prepared to interview for teaching positions in the partner district. This included a day where several principals visited seminar to serve on a Q&A panel and provide feedback on mock interview responses. During the observed panel, principals told the beginners to highlight their participation in CTP without overselling it. They also advised being enthusiastic, and mentioned grounding teaching philosophies in examples from classroom experience.

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**May 15, 2014**

*Final Presentations of Learning*

On the last seminar the beginners broke into small groups and gave presentations on their teaching experiences. They needed to include information on their school and evidence of student learning. They were observed and evaluated by a program leader. Many beginners provided tables and graphs of data. A few beginners expressed concerns over the amount of testing they observed. One beginner wished she could have seen her relational teaching style modeled.
were put on specialized learning plans and persistent low performance could lead to dismissal from the program.

*The Weekly Seminar*

A component of the CTP program that I attended regularly from October 2013 to May 2014 was the program’s weekly seminar. According to the syllabus, the stated goal of the seminar was to “foster reflective, research based classroom practice.” Specific objectives included (paraphrased): develop proficiency with the district’s teacher performance instrument; collect and analyze student achievement data; merge theory and practice to inform instruction; and prepare to hire for teaching positions within the district. The two required texts for the seminar were Doug Lemov’s (2007) *Teach Like a Champion* and Stephen Farr’s (2010) *Teaching as Leadership*. The seminar took place most Thursdays, started between 8:30 and 11:00 a.m., and typically lasted for 3-6 hours. Given its large size, the cohort was usually split into two smaller groups of about 30 beginners made up of a mixture of elementary and secondary candidates. Two instructors led each group.

**Setting features.** The seminars were held in the education building at the local university where the beginners pursued their Master’s degrees. The inside of the education building was bright and spacious, with an open floor plan designed around a large, central foyer that occasionally played host to conferences and daylong events for educators. The classrooms that housed the weekly seminar were built to accommodate digital technologies, with many power outlets in the floor and flat screen televisions and projectors integrated seamlessly into the walls. Also, the program enforced a professional dress code. In seminar, women usually wore skirts, blouses, and dress pants, while men wore slacks, collared shirts, and ties on occasion.

Chapter 3
Seminar topics & routines. The seminar focused on general instructional practices including behavior and time management, assessment and grading, and data literacy (i.e., using data-tracking software and using achievement data to modify instruction). The seminar activities changed in focus over the year (refer back to Figure 3.2). In the fall the emphasis was on behavior management, lesson planning, and data management. Through much of the winter the focus was assessment practices and strategies for job interviewing. By spring, the emphasis shifted to setting up the social and material environment of the classroom and handling the first few weeks of school. The four main instructors (Kyle, Jason, Lauren, and Susan) led most seminar activities, though guest instructors were common and gave lessons on giving feedback, grading and assessment, and job interviewing.

Typical seminars tended to have a few common components (not necessarily in this order). First, there was often a brief discussion on a “habit of mind,” or a quote selected by the instructors. Some examples included, “Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers (Voltaire),” and “Education is not filling the pail but lighting the fire (W.B. Yeats).” Second, seminars frequently included what instructors referred to as “temperature checks” during which groups of 15–20 beginners met with an instructor to share how they were feeling and what they were looking forward to or anxious about in the coming weeks. Finally, each week the instructors typically engaged the beginners in lengthier activities (~2–3 hours) on one or two criteria from the district’s teacher performance instrument (e.g., rigor, differentiation). During these activities the beginners were asked to consider what counted as effective instantiation of the criteria, where they saw it in their teaching, how they could get better at it, and ways to incorporate it into lesson plans. The instructors often presented the criteria by showing video of exemplary teaching and having the beginners discuss what they had observed.
**Interviewing for teaching positions.** To assist the beginners with getting hired in the program’s partner district, program leaders spent six consecutive weeks in seminar (January-February) coaching them on how to talk to hiring committees about their teaching philosophies and experiences. They engaged the beginners in activities to help them narrow their focus from broader philosophies of education to specific examples illustrative of criteria on the district’s teacher performance instrument. For example, during one seminar the beginners practiced making “elevator speeches,” or a thirty-second summary of their instructional principles, experiences, and goals. The interview preparation also included several rounds of mock interviewing with feedback provided by program and school leaders. The preparation culminated in a seminar featuring a panel of principals from the district who addressed questions on what they looked for in job candidates. The beginners then entered the job market by attending a district-wide job fair before interviewing with interested schools. Getting an offer took longer for some than others, and instructors reminded them to be patient and persistent in seeking positions.

**Site #2: Montessori teacher training**

The Montessori teacher training program (MONT) provided a path to an American Montessori Society endorsed teaching certificate in early childhood (ages 3-6, or grades P-K), lower elementary (ages 6-9, or 1-3 grade), or upper elementary (ages 9-12, or 3-5 grade). Each certificate pathway had its own cohort of beginning teachers separated into different classrooms within the training facility.

*Participants*

I chose to study the lower elementary cohort at MONT because the focal beginners whom I was authorized to follow at CTP did their residencies within K-3 classrooms. This limited how much of the larger MONT community that I observed. Included in my study was Jill, the
program director, who oversaw the entire MONT program (Figure 3.3). There was also Nancy, who directed the lower elementary component and served as one of nine instructors for the summer session courses. The larger MONT community also included mentor teachers and field coordinators for the residency, who were not included in the study. There were also a few visitors to the summer session courses, including a professor of poetry who conducted an afternoon seminar on engaging children in reading and writing poetry. The visitors who provided signed consent were included in the study.

Compared to CTP, the cohort of beginning teachers in the lower elementary program at MONT was relatively small (n=25). Most beginners appeared to live within a short drive of the
MONT training facility, though several individuals indicated that they were from out of state. According to Nancy, several of the beginners started the program already having been hired by Montessori schools as full instructors, and the rest had been placed as assistants in the classrooms of affiliated mentor teachers.

*The summer training session*

The program was divided into two components: a summer training session followed by a residency year served within a Montessori classroom (Figure 3.4). I spent most of my time at MONT within the program’s summer session. That session lasted eight straight weeks from June to August and met daily from 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Over the summer beginners took a slate of eleven courses. Though all courses addressed the Montessori vision and method in some way, two of them—Montessori Philosophy and Classroom Leadership—covered the tradition’s guiding principles, history, and key instructional features in greater depth and detail. The beginners also took courses on Design (of lessons and materials) and Practical Life (practice with social etiquette and opportunities for hands on, vocational work). The remaining courses emphasized the Montessori approach to math, language, geometry, art, physical education, and Universe (science) and Living World (social studies). Some instructors taught multiple courses, though most taught just one.

**Setting features.** The summer session was held in a training facility that contained several classrooms, each devoted to a different level of P-5 education. The lower-elementary classroom where the MONT cohort met was a large square room lit by white fluorescent lights and a large skylight. Often there was a wood table with short legs positioned in the middle of the room for the presentation of lessons. Along the walls were child-height bookcases and shelves full of materials for lower elementary lessons. One corner was devoted to math, with a wooden
The intensive summer training went for 8 weeks from June-August, 2014, followed by a residency year spent in a host Montessori school/classroom as an assistant or lead teacher. All data was collected between June 16th and the fall seminar, November 21-23. Much was observed during the intensive summer training, though I summarize a few key moments that were revisited often throughout my analysis. Note that no second interview was conducted for Mike.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 16th</td>
<td>Intensive Summer Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 17th</td>
<td>“Imagine a School...”: Discussion on Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 18th</td>
<td>Discussion on Why Testing &amp; Standards are a Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 8th</td>
<td>Reading and Discussion on “Cosmic Education”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 11th</td>
<td>Block Demo on Authentic Montessori Classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 21st</td>
<td>How Classrooms Serve the Pedagogical Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 7th</td>
<td>An Emotional Last Day of the Summer Session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.4 Calendar of data collection and notable events/themes from the Montessori teacher training program (MONT).**

![Calendar of data collection and notable events/themes from the Montessori teacher training program (MONT).](image-url)
display case that contained row upon row of bead chains and geometric shapes. Another corner, focused on science and social studies, had a display with an array of small flags and a few globes, including one that cut away to reveal the Earth’s layers. Finally, the dress code seemed relaxed, with beginners often wearing shorts, jeans, flowing skirts, and occasionally walking barefoot around the carpeted classroom (instructors, too).

Course tasks & routines. Each day of the summer session was broken into morning and afternoon sessions that were punctuated by fifteen-minute breaks and separated by an hour lunch. MONT beginners volunteered to bring snacks to share with the cohort during the afternoon break. A typical day started with Jill (program director) providing copies of a poem that the beginners read aloud, each stanza being read by a different beginner. This was followed by an invitation to share thoughts and reactions. Comments were of a personal nature and often emotional. Courses lasted five to ten consecutive days and tended to proceed in a similar fashion. During the first class instructors provided an overview of the Montessori method applied to their subject (i.e., math, language, etc.). Then in some cases, such as in the Universe and Language courses, they performed a Great Lesson—scripted stories told in all Montessori classrooms that situate the listener in the world’s major social and ecological narratives. Subsequent sessions typically entailed a sequential march through lessons. Instructors tended to spend the first half of a morning or afternoon session demonstrating how to deliver multiple lessons. After watching the lesson demonstrations, beginners were then given a chance to try out the observed lessons and materials during the second half. Sometimes individuals unrolled mats on the floor and worked alone to figure out a lesson. More frequently, though, they partnered up or formed small teams and took turns playing the role of teacher or student.
Each course culminated with a paper assignment requiring beginners to describe the underlying rationale of Montessori’s approach as evident in the lessons along with their personal thoughts and anticipations about using the method. These reflection papers were not graded but did include comments from instructors.

**Organizing personal albums of lesson plans.** During the courses beginners constructed big binders, or *albums*, full of lesson plans. The MONT beginners were encouraged to annotate and illustrate the lesson handouts. Many of the beginners took digital photos of the lesson materials once the instructor had finished presenting them. After an instructor completed a lesson, the beginners would put the corresponding lesson plan sheets into plastic sleeves within their albums. When completed, these albums were often very full, some containing over a hundred pages. Completed albums were submitted to instructors, who checked to see that they were complete, appropriately organized, and ready to be used by the beginners in their residency classrooms that fall.

*The residency year*

After the summer training session the MONT beginners did their residencies in lower elementary Montessori classrooms (typically 20-30 students, mixed 1-3 grade). Regardless of their teaching status (e.g., assistant or lead teacher), the beginners had to show progress with implementing the Montessori method. They monitored that progress through a journal supplied by the program full of handouts and forms. At several points in the residency they were formally observed teaching lessons and given feedback by mentor teachers and a practicum coordinator that they inserted into their journals. They were also required to develop a physical material for a lesson, such as a laminated set of language cards or a set of land features boards. Finally, the beginners needed to conduct several formal observations of the students in their classrooms.
using different techniques for qualitatively and quantitatively documenting evidence of students’ behavior, socialization, and learning.

During the residency year the cohort returned twice to the MONT facility for three days—once in November and again in February—to take additional courses (in the November session that I attended it was a course on “culture”) and to be assessed on their instructional quality. This latter task involved delivering randomly assigned lessons in a given discipline to a small group of their peers and an instructor. They were given an hour to prepare their lessons and could not use albums during the instructional event. The instructor observing them provided feedback along with an indication of whether or not they had demonstrated sufficient mastery. For the November session they were assessed on their ability to deliver math lessons.

*Focal beginning teachers*

As noted, there were many participants within each of these two teacher preparation programs. Reflective of my methodology, I wanted a view of the programs from the participants’ perspective. I therefore invited a subset of beginning elementary teachers from CTP and MONT to be interviewed multiple times. I also asked if they would permit me to observe them teaching in their residency classrooms. My goal was to select enough participants to offer a range of perspectives without compromising my capacity to conduct multiple interviews and probe into individual beginner’s experiences and possible desires.

*Selecting and gaining access to focal beginners*

Program leaders at both programs requested that I coordinate with them on whom to approach for inclusion in my sample. So far as I could tell, their recommendations were based on logistical concerns given that many beginners were completing their residencies in schools at great distance from me. At CTP, Mary (program director) suggested that I study eight beginning
teachers conducting their residency at two low performing elementary schools that served primarily students of color: Downtown Elementary School and Fieldstone Elementary School. I sent emails to the eight CTP beginners explaining my purposes and what would be required of them as volunteers. All but one agreed to participate as a focal beginner. (This one “outstanding” beginner—Ryan—actually did not reply to my initial requests. However, later in the year after he had been counseled out of the program, I sent another request and he agreed to be interviewed.)

At MONT, Nancy (director of lower elementary program) helped me to identify seven prospective beginners who would be teaching at a range of schools, including two individuals, David and Kate, who would be working as lead teachers at charter Montessori schools located in the same district affiliated with CTP. I sent invitation emails to the MONT beginners and all seven agreed to participate.

Table 3.1 Focal beginning teachers from both programs. Note that all MONT beginners were lower elementary teachers, meaning they taught classrooms of mixed 1-3 grade students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residency School</th>
<th>Times interviewed</th>
<th>Times observed teaching</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CTP (n=8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>Fieldstone Elementary (1st grade)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Fieldstone Elementary (1st grade)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Fieldstone Elementary (special ed.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Fieldstone Elementary (3rd grade)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Fieldstone Elementary (2nd grade)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Downtown Elementary (K)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey</td>
<td>Downtown Elementary (2nd grade)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Downtown Elementary (K/1st)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONT (n=7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Private Montessori</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Private Montessori</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Charter Montessori*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justine</td>
<td>Private Montessori</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Charter Montessori*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Private Montessori</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>Private Montessori</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Located in same school district where CTP placed its beginning teachers.
I thus ended up with 15 total focal beginning teachers between the two programs (Table 3.1). My sample had more women (n=9) than men (n=6), with proportionally more women in the MONT sample. All but two participants in the sample were white, with James (CTP) identifying as black and David (MONT) identifying as Latino. Also, Mark (CTP) identified as ethnically Columbian. All of the focal beginners in my sample were college graduates and most had been out of college for a few years employed in a range of professions. None of the CTP beginners in my sample had taught in K-12 classrooms in an official capacity. By comparison, all MONT individuals in my sample had teaching experience: David, Kate, and Justine were certified public school teachers, each with several years of teaching experience. The rest had worked as assistants or volunteers in Montessori classrooms prior to starting the program.

**Researcher subjectivity**

I assume that my personal narrative and positionality as a white, heterosexual male from a middle-class family in contemporary U.S. society shaped the study in several ways. First, I want to note how my perspective on teaching reflected in part my extensive time as a student and a teacher. As a child I attended a mixture of seven different public and private K-12 schools, and as a teacher I have taught for over ten years in a variety of schools and educational settings ranging from more traditional classrooms to outdoor environments. In those settings I have served in different roles, including volunteer, teaching assistant, program leader, and instructor of record. Graduate coursework and several years of teaching teachers at CU-Boulder have also opened me up to the issues and dilemmas facing teachers and those who prepare them. This variety of experiences has provided me with a broad survey of the many possible visions of what teaching and learning can look like and an understanding of what might make those visions more or less attractive to teachers. In fact, this study emerged from my uneasy sense that researchers,
policy-makers, and district administrators might be assuming that the desirability of their visions for education is uniformly shared, or that their position of power gives them unfettered license to decide what others should desire of teaching and teacher preparation. I also came to this topic while reflecting on what I want of teaching and how I need to be careful with assuming, self-righteously, that my desires of education always reflect what is best for children, schools, and society.

Second, I want to note how, conceptually, desire had been on my mind at least since a Masters class I took spring, 2005, at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education on adult development. The instructor and developmental psychologist, Robert Kegan, mentioned at one point how people had a desire to be seen that remained strong throughout their lives. By this he meant that humans require the committed attention of other humans to grow, develop, and fulfill their potential. For many people, that attention can be hard to come by for any number of reasons, thus making it desirable (see Kegan, 1982). At CU-Boulder, desire emerged further as a concept of interest as I conducted a pilot study of a methods course for secondary science teachers in which I became curious at the instructor’s framing of certain practices with affective language (e.g., “I love this…”). I found myself wondering what impact this might be having on the beginning teachers uptake of those practices. But the watershed moment in my conceptual thinking was the recommendation of James K.A. Smith’s (2009) text, *Desiring the Kingdom*, by a Catholic priest who has been a close friend of my family for over twenty years. The book foregrounded desire as an important aspect of instructional practice and education more generally, and spoke to my concern that the heart was always present but oddly absent in typical conversations about teaching. Increasingly I became convinced that the concept could be useful for studying and reforming teacher preparation, and I sought to elaborate its contours through a
review of the literature on desire, which I presented at the 2014 International Conference of the Learning Sciences (Renga, 2014a).

Finally, I want to acknowledge that it was a privilege to investigate desire, by which I mean that I have never (knowingly) felt called to address issues stemming from my race, class, and gender in quite the same way as other scholars. Indeed, the scholars who have most influenced my work tend to also be white men (e.g., David Hansen, James Smith, Mark Edmundson, Jim Garrison, Parker Palmer, Dan Liston, and others), and I have often wondered if my academic interests in spirituality and emotion are in part a luxury of my being relatively unburdened by the yoke of oppression. When colleagues remind me of the pervasiveness of injustice and inequity, I can see how studying desire can come across as self-serving. And it is, to some degree, as my path into teaching and this Ph.D. was born not of a desire for social justice but of my deep love of nature and a desire for public education to allow for more nature and place-based instruction. Rather than undertaking a study to further my particular desire, however, I thought it would be more useful to study the underlying phenomenon for a richer understanding of desire and how I might facilitate discussion across varying desires for teacher preparation.

**Data collection**

I collected data for approximately one year between October 2013 and November 2014 (see calendars in Figures 3.2 and 3.4). The two programs did not overlap, so I was able to observe CTP from October 2013 to May 2014 and then observe MONT from June 2014 to November 2015. There were gaps in my data collection as I missed several months of the preparation activity at each of the yearlong programs: delays in IRB approval led to my missing the first four months of the CTP program; at MONT I missed the last half of the residency year, which went until school let out in June 2015.
“WE WANT TO BRING THEM INTO WHAT WE LOVE” 86

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CTP</th>
<th>MONT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar/Course Observation only (hrs.)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar/Course Observation/video (hrs.)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>68</td>
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<td>Classroom Leadership (20)</td>
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<td>Montessori Philosophy (11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universe (10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math (9)</td>
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<td>Practical Life, Language, Geometry, World, Design (18 total)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom observation (hrs.)*</td>
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<td>Teaching debrief observation (hrs.)*</td>
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<td>Syllabus for weekly seminar</td>
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<td>Philosophy of Ed statements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily poems</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Only field notes. No video taken in the schools.

Table 3.2 Data collected at each research site.

Data sources

Data was collected via observational field notes, video/audio recording, and artifact collection (Table 3.2). At CTP I attended a total of 18 weekly seminars and conducted 22 interviews with eight focal beginners. At MONT I attended 27 of the 36 days of the summer session and conducted 13 interviews with seven focal beginners. The resulting data corpus from both sites included 428 total pages of typed field notes and 108 hours of video. Rather than transcribing all of the video I transcribed sections of interest based on my initial rounds of coding. I also had 35 individual interviews from fifteen individuals comprising 22 hours of audio; all interviews were transcribed in full. I also collected several handouts and reading materials from both sites.

Observations of program seminars and courses

Field observations of the CTP weekly seminar and MONT summer session courses served as an important way of developing my understanding of at least some of the teacher
preparation activity in each program. During seminars/courses I sat off to the side of the classroom, usually in a corner, and typed field notes. In line with grounded theory methodology, I worked to remain conceptually open while taking low-inference notes of discussion and activity. This was especially important given that I was not observing the programs concurrently but rather one after the other, and I did not want to limit what was documented at MONT after having spent time at CTP. To structure my field notes I used a two-column template, with the left column for documenting low-inference details and the right for noting thoughts and moments of interest.

I video recorded as much of the seminars/courses as possible, with audio serving as a backup to augment poor video quality. Video was taken using a flip camera mounted on a small tripod, which allowed me to record discretely and to easily move the camera to capture small group conversations. Whole class lectures and discussions were captured with the camera positioned on a table or shelf in a corner of the room. I did occasionally have to swivel the camera and zoom it to capture speakers. Small groups proved more challenging given the noise level and the fact that I only had one camera. To choose a group my decision rule was to record groups with focal beginners in them, especially groups with multiple focal beginners. I also tried to take multiple recordings of each focal beginner working in a small group. I always asked the beginners’ (focal and non-focal) permission before recording their small groups.

Most of my observations at CTP were of the weekly seminar, which I attended each week starting on October 3, 2013. By this point the seminar had been underway since mid-August. I only attended the weekly seminar and did not observe the other graduate classes given limitations in my time and resources. Shortly after the CTP seminars ended in early May, 2014, I started observing the MONT summer session courses, which started June 16, 2014. Over the
summer I observed at least the first day of all courses except Physical Education to capture how the instructors described their courses. I made the decision to not attend every session after having done so for the Math and Universe courses and realizing, after reviewing the data, that the first day proved most useful for my purposes as a time when the instructors tended to share their views on the Montessori method and philosophy while providing overviews of their courses. I did, however, attend all sessions of the Montessori Philosophy and Classroom leadership courses, both of which provided the most explicit framing of the Montessori tradition and its rationales—aspects important to my inquiry in the program’s orienting narratives. The closest parallel to CTP’s weekly seminar was the Classroom Leadership course, which emphasized general instructional practices including classroom management, establishing the classroom space, assessment strategies, collecting student data, and parent interaction.

Observations of classroom teaching

Along with observing seminars and courses I visited elementary schools to observe the focal beginners as they taught lessons and received feedback from coaches and mentors. I was not authorized to record video or audio in the schools and just took typed field notes. When in the classrooms I sat in the back or wherever the beginner or mentor thought I would be least distracting. Most of the time the children in the classes ignored me, though occasionally they took an interest in my presence and I had to kindly redirect them to pay attention or return to the task at hand.

During the classroom observations I did low-inference documentation of the beginners’ teaching, noting what they did, what they said, and how they interacted with students. These

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2 Also, my first child was born on June 19, 2014, and I needed to balance data collection with being a father and attentive partner.
observations gave me insight into what the beginners were experiencing in their classrooms. For CTP, this helped me to better imagine and understand what was discussed during the weekly seminar when the beginners brought up their classroom experiences. I also used the observations to prepare for interviews, and during the interviews the beginners could assume that I knew aspects of their classroom situations and refer to specific moments I had seen. Generally, I hoped that spending time in the classrooms would reveal to the beginners my genuine interest in trying to understand their residency circumstances and why certain things might matter to them.

I was able to conduct three hour-long observations of teaching for each of the CTP focal beginners, once in the fall and twice in the spring (except Ryan, whom I never saw teach). I also observed Ben teaching a fourth time. In addition to the classroom observations I attended several meetings where beginners debriefed their solo teaching with a team that included a seminar instructor, their mentor teacher, and the program’s building coordinator. For the MONT focal beginners I was only able to make two total observations of teaching: once for Kate and once for David. I did, however, have the opportunity to interview Justine and Carol at the private Montessori school where they both served as assistants, and they were able to give me a tour of their lower-elementary classrooms. The lack of classroom observation opportunities at MONT was unfortunate and mostly reflected limited access to transportation during the fall. Even so, I spent more time with the MONT beginners during their summer session than I spent with the CTP beginners during their weekly seminar.

Semi-structured interviews

At each program I conducted multiple semi-structured interviews with the focal beginning teachers. Generally, I wanted to know more about what the beginners’ found more or less desirable about teaching, becoming teachers, and their preparation experiences. I also used
the interviews to develop my conceptual framework in several ways. First, I was curious to get a sense of the personal orienting narratives the beginners told themselves and others about why they chose teaching and their particular program. I hoped to get a sense of the ideals and purposes that they desired to realize by becoming teachers. Also, I wanted to know what they were asked to do and who they thought they were expected to do as well as who they felt they were expected to be and become through participating in their program. Second, I wanted to understand their experiences in the program and school settings, and especially what they found (dis)pleasurable, (de)motivating, and (un)rewarding (Schroeder, 2004). Along with this, in what ways did they think the program activity or teaching experiences meet or not-meet their expectations? Third, I wanted to check my interpretations of what I was observing in the seminars/courses and in the schools and elementary classrooms. The interviews were semi-structured to allow room for the conversation to tack toward themes of interest for individual beginners (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2003). This approach offered unexpected insights and opportunities for me to probe further into potentially fruitful terrain.

At CTP I was able to conduct three 40-minute interviews with seven focal beginners and one interview with the eighth (Ryan). Rounds of interviews at CTP usually happened within the span of 2-3 weeks spaced over the course of the year, with rounds in December, February, and May (refer back to Figure 3.2). By spacing them out I hoped to sample from multiple periods of the program experience and perhaps to track changes in beginners’ thoughts and experiences over time. Most of the CTP interviews were at the beginners’ residency schools in locations that the beginners’ chose, including empty break rooms, classrooms, and school libraries. One beginner (Dawn) preferred that I meet her in a coffee shop near her house.
At MONT I was able to conduct two 30-minute interviews with six focal beginners and one interview with the seventh beginner (Mike). The first round of interviews took place during mid-July during the summer session (refer back to Figure 3.4). All first round interviews were conducted during lunch breaks at the MONT training facility. The second round took place from early-September to early-October once the beginners had started their residency year in Montessori classrooms. For these interviews I met several beginners, including Carol, Justine, Kate, and David, at their residency schools; Tara and Alex requested that we conduct their second interviews at coffee shops.

An evolving interview protocol

In accordance with my methodology, I modified the interview protocol over the course of the study to delve more deeply into particular themes and remain responsive to participant understandings (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2003). At both CTP and MONT, I conducted the first round of interviews using mostly the same set of questions (protocols in Appendix B). I started by inquiring into why the beginners chose teaching and their program. Framing their rationales for teaching and recounting what led them into teaching helped me to understand their personal orienting narratives for becoming a teacher, which I could then compare to the narratives supplied by program leaders and instructors during seminars/courses. (Later in the chapter I elaborate on my operationalization of an “orienting narrative” as it emerged in my analysis.) Another way I aimed to get at the beginners’ understanding of the orienting narratives of their program was by asking, “So far as you can tell, what are the program’s expectations for you?” As a follow-up I was prepared to ask if they found the expectations reasonable.

In the first interview I also drew upon Schroeder’s (2004) suggestion that investigations of desire should attend to indications of pleasure, motivation, and reward, and I developed
questions derived from those framed in the last chapter (Chapter 2, p. 30). For example, to get at what elicited (dis)pleasure in teaching I asked the beginners to describe for me what made for a bad or good day in the classroom. And to illuminate what might be motivating their learning of teaching, or what they desired to accomplish through preparation, I invited them to share any teaching goals. Beyond the scripted questions, I was sensitive to Schroeder’s tripartite framing of desire while interviewing, and I often posed follow-up questions to probe aspects of the framing. Take the following exchange for example:

Justine: Jeff was amazing, the Universe teacher. And so is Lynn (Math instructor). I just have a lot of respect for them. I don’t know. I really love them.

IR: What was amazing about them for you?

In this instance I was curious to know more of the details that led to Justine’s affection for her instructors. I wondered if they had provided her with feedback that might be fueling her desire for teaching. Or perhaps the instructors had contributed to Justine’s desirable image or ideal of teaching.

For the subsequent rounds of interviewing I spent time reviewing data materials and developing more targeted questions to get at aspects of desire. As I show in the next sections, this looked somewhat different at each program given differences in the activities and program requirements.

Interview protocol revisions at CTP

At this point in the study I was still seeking paths into understanding desire and my conceptual apparatus was rather broad. I had Schroeder’s (2004) tripartite framing of desire in mind, along with emerging notions of orienting narratives (Smith, 2013) and that objects of desire could have pedagogical and ontological dimensions. I was also beginning to really
appreciate the role of the mind as an imaginative space where objects could command attention. I thus decided that it could be worthwhile to ask more open-ended questions prompting beginners to share what was on their mind at the time of the interview.

Not wanting to stray too far from my data, however, I looked over content logs of CTP’s weekly seminars to identify themes that might offer inroads into enriching my understanding desire. I also composed analytic memos and developed a table to chart themes of interest from the data and questions to ask the CTP beginners. Table 3.3 is a condensed version of that table. I
knew they were interviewing for teaching positions and wondered how intensely they might desire to get hired or work at a particular school. I was also interested in what they and made of certain concepts (e.g., rigor) and what they might desire to know more about as a beginning teacher. And I wanted to get at more of what their hearts might be invested in, including instructional practices or ways of working with students that they might be growing attached to and eager to try out. Or perhaps they had seen things in the classroom that caused them displeasure and they desired to do something different in their own classroom on day.

By the second round of interviews I had also observed the CTP beginners within their elementary schools and classrooms, and I wanted to get a sense of what about their experiences in these settings might be influencing what they desired. From field notes of these observations and the weekly seminars, I developed a few questions for each beginner. For example, when observing James in his classroom, he mentioned to me how he liked being in a classroom that was centrally located in the building, with teachers and students stopping by all day. I wondered what about this location made it desirable for him. With Ben I had noticed how positive and upbeat he seemed as a teacher. I thus wondered what might be his sources of displeasure, the kinds of things that could lead him to desire a different teaching situation.

With the third round of interviews at CTP I similarly developed questions to try and understand the beginners’ desires around learning teaching. Some questions were geared toward having them share what was on their minds as potentially motivating or (dis)pleasurable. I thus asked about job interviewing and the most recent round of feedback they had received from their three-week solo teaching event. As they finished up the program year I also wanted to check-in on what aspects of teaching they might be investing their hearts in as they looked toward their future as a teacher of record. Finally, I wanted to probe their respective images of teaching and

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what ideals they saw as desirable for becoming a teacher through CTP. This led several beginners to mention leadership and being or becoming a leader as an ideal at CTP that resonated with them. The label of “type A” also came up as a way of describing the ideal candidate for the CTP program, and I asked follow-up questions to further understand the label and why it might be more or less desirable.

Unlike the second interview, I did not develop individual questions for specific beginners. In the second interviews I often ran out of time before getting to the individual questions. I also found that it was better to allow the interview to unfold from what was on the beginners’ minds and to use the prepared questions to steer the interview toward certain themes as needed. Likewise, it seemed more useful to elicit their perspectives on similar themes or shared experiences, like interviewing or being assessed after a solo teach event. That way I could get multiple views and experiences on common experiences and compare them for similarities and differences.

*Interview protocol revisions at MONT*

At MONT I conducted the first round of interviews using a nearly identical protocol to the one used at CTP. To get a sense of their personal orienting narratives and what their hearts might be invested in, I asked why they chose to be teachers and why they chose Montessori. The one question I added to the first interview protocol at MONT aimed to get individual perspectives on the notion of “traditional” teaching and classrooms (Table 3.4). This descriptor, “traditional,” had come up frequently during the summer session courses. Even without my asking the question, the beginners tended to bring it up when sharing why they chose Montessori and the MONT program. In fact, the MONT beginners spent much of the first interview sharing their experiences with the Montessori method and why it appealed to them compared to tradition
Theme | Question | Conceptual rationale
---|---|---
**Interview #1**
Traditional teaching and schooling | *What do you make of non-Montessori or “traditional” teaching and classrooms?* | Open-ended inquiry into beginner’s take on a common orienting narrative at MONT

**Interview #2**
Current preoccupation | *What is currently on your mind regarding the program?* | Open-ended inquiry into desired objects commanding attention in the imagination
Transition into residency | *Looking back on the summer, how would you describe the experience?* | Getting a sense of heart’s investment and personal orienting narrative
Evaluations on teaching progress | *How do you feel about the upcoming math assessments in November?* | Gauging how interviewing might be commanding attention
Checking in on residency | *How has your classroom experience been thus far?* | Getting a sense of heart’s investment and sources of pleasure/displeasure
Beginners had to document goals | *What are two or three goals you have for yourself as a teacher?* | Getting a sense of heart’s investment and personal orienting narrative
Lots of positivity about being a Montessori teacher | *What do you think it takes to be successful at MONT and teaching in Montessori schools?* | Getting at desirable ontological dimensions of becoming a teacher
Teaching as leading | *Do you see yourself as a leader?* | Getting at possible desired futures

Table 3.4 Themes I aimed to address in the first and second interviews at MONT.

public school teaching. These experiences were usually drawn from time spent as volunteers or assistants in Montessori classrooms prior to entering the program. Also, several beginners had worked as teachers in so-called traditional classrooms. As such, the MONT beginners were in a position to convey a sense of what they desired of teaching and what aspects of teaching and Montessori their hearts appeared to be invested in. Then again, they could have also wanted a job. I therefore wanted to be aware of the possibility of multiple desires informing a desire to teach.

By the time I conducted the second round of interviews with the MONT beginners they had started the residency component of their program. I was therefore curious to know about that experience and what about they found (dis)pleasurable and what they desired of themselves and the experience as they looked to the future. Also, I wanted to know what aspects of practice they struggled with and how this might affect their capacity to stay oriented toward the desired ideals...
of the Montessori method. As such, I asked for examples of what was positive and not so positive about their residency teaching. I also asked them about instructional goals to get a sense of what they might desire of themselves instructionally. At the time of the second round of interviews (September) I suspected that the beginners might be turning their attention to the 3-day course in November and the evaluation on their teaching progress. I wondered how it might be on their minds and possibly be giving rise to a desire to succeed (or not fail). I thus asked them to share their thoughts on the forthcoming November session.

Finally, in the second interview with MONT beginners I wanted to get at some of the ontological dimensions of becoming a teacher. Over the summer I got a strong impression that many of the beginners were pleased to be “Montessorians” (a term they used to describe themselves) and were invested in the program’s ideal image of the child-centered teacher. But I wanted to check my impression, thus I inquired into their views on what it took to be a Montessori teacher. Finally, the CTP beginners had discussed leadership as an ontological ideal and possible reason to leave teaching, so I asked the MONT beginners if they saw themselves as leaders or imagined leaving the classroom for leadership roles one day. I was curious to know if they desired something more than Montessori teaching. Also, how strongly were their hearts invested in being Montessori teachers for the duration of their careers? Answers to these questions would prove useful for comparison to what the CTP beginners had shared with me.

A tension in data collection

During data collection, the most challenging tension I faced was with how to present my research topic—desire—to participants in a way that was honest and earnest while not saying too much such that participants became overly guarded or too willing bend my ear. It occurred to me early on in the study that concepts like motivation, disposition, or even grit had the conceptual
vicious of being relatively sterile, with a built in assumption of researcher distance and objectivity. It is arguably easy to talk about such concepts with a straight face and a lack of suspicion. By comparison, desire feels intrusive. Just saying the word in normal conversation can feel awkward, even more so when one tries to explain it. I described this awkwardness in a journal entry made after my first meeting with Mary (program director) at CTP:

At one point Mary began to characterize the focus of my project but didn’t quite have the words. I suggested that it’s a little out there and we both smiled. Throughout our hour-long conversation my project focus would come up a few times and it always made me feel a little uncomfortable. I mentioned how the pleasure dimension of my framework could end up being my contribution to the research literature. A few minutes later while trying to tease out the value of my project Mary paused a little as she used the word “pleasure.” [Research journal- Wednesday, August 21, 2013]

I felt less awkwardness when discussing my study topic with Jill (program director) at MONT. Maria Montessori used terms like “peace” and “love” in her philosophical treatise, so perhaps Jill was primed to be less taken aback by “desire.” Regardless, this difference highlighted the possibility that I might see desire more in one site and could misinterpret its visibility as a sign that it was more prevalent or played a greater role in one site compared to the other.

Likewise, I did not want to convey a sense to the beginners that I was studying desire as a way of passing judgment for or against a particular approach to teacher preparation or view of teaching and teachers. When introducing the study to the beginners I thus decided that saying less was better and it was important to state the term matter-of-factly. Reading from my recruitment script I would thus state, “I want to understand how desire factors into learning..."
“WE WANT TO BRING THEM INTO WHAT WE LOVE”

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<th>Analysis step</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<td>December 2013 –</td>
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<td>3. Data pull of “hot spots” – used for memos; discussed with committee members</td>
<td>February 2014 –</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Review of field notes, video, and interviews to develop interview questions (CTP round 2)</td>
<td>February 2014</td>
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<td>5. Creation of coding log to track emerging trends and possible codes from framework</td>
<td>February 2014 –</td>
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<td>6. Watching video and transcribing “hot spots” to create video content logs</td>
<td>February 2014 –</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Review of field notes, video, and interviews to develop interview questions (CTP round 3)</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
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<td>8. Meet with individual committee members discuss evolving conceptualization of desire</td>
<td>April-May 2014</td>
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<td>9. Review of field notes, video, and interviews to develop interview questions (MONT round 2)</td>
<td>August 2014</td>
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<td>10. Initial, open coding of data from seminars/courses</td>
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<td>17. Revising of findings chapters and conceptual framework to refine concepts and themes</td>
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Table 3.5 Timeline of data analysis. Dashes (–) indicate that the step was ongoing through collection.

As noted, I was aiming to understand the concept of desire as well as use it as an interpretive tool. The analytic process I used was thus messy at times as I moved between data, participants, literature, and my interpretations and purposes. To get a handle on my large data teaching and what desire looks like as beginning teachers learn the practices of teaching within their programs and courses.” I would then move on to discussing my methods.

Finally, I wanted to avoid any discomfort that might result from my directly asking participants about their desires, so I was less direct in my questioning. Besides ensuring comfort, taking an indirect approach seemed more likely to yield insightful data about how desire was present and emerged as individuals talked about themselves and their experiences. A tradeoff was that the beginners almost never used the term “desire” in the interviews, which proved analytically challenging through conceptually enriching.

**Data analysis**

As noted, I was aiming to understand the concept of desire as well as use it as an interpretive tool. The analytic process I used was thus messy at times as I moved between data, participants, literature, and my interpretations and purposes. To get a handle on my large data
corpus I undertook the analysis in stages in accordance with constructivist grounded theory methodology (cf., Charmaz, 1995). Most of the steps I took are laid out chronologically in Table 3.5. In what follows I walk through my analytic process.

*Early analysis*

I began analyzing my data not long after I started data collection. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, I had some idea of the philosophies and aims of the preparation programs, but I did not know what this would mean in terms of desire. After the first several weeks of data collection at CTP I began to identify moments in the data for conceptual exploration. Writing about these moments in memos helped me to unpack some notable features of desire that would coalesce into organizing themes and then codes later in the analysis. For example, many of those data segments showed moments of visible affect and emotionality that might signal pleasure or displeasure and thus certain *states of affairs* (Schroeder, 2015) that might be desired (or not desired). They also revealed aspects of the subject-object dynamic from activity theory and perhaps ways that program leaders directed beginners toward desired object.

One such moment I explored occurred during the last CTP weekly seminar before the winter break when Lauren (instructor) cautioned the cohort against getting too “comfortable in your own teaching skin [CTP-seminar-120513].” In doing so she appeared to establish a desirable object—being comfortable with teaching. Several beginners responded to her comment with concern. Other beginners appeared to take her meaning and run with it. For example, one beginner stated,

[I]’s nice feeling comfortable and I think we can get relaxed, and I don’t want to get relaxed… I still feel like there’s so much left for you to do. Because I think if I don’t feel
like that then I’m not gonna be the teacher that I want to be, I’m just gonna relax... be average, just show up, not really helping the kids much...

In a comment like this I began to see how a beginner might convey a desire by using the language of “I want” or “I don’t want.” It also showed a type of object that a beginner might desire, such as a way of being a teacher or a type of teacher.

In terms of activity theory, what was starting to emerge for me in analyzing comments like this and others was how emotion or affect could signal the nature of the connection between the subject and object. Such ideas would eventually crystallize into the object categories (i.e., generalized, pedagogical, and ontological) in my formulation of orienting narratives and inform my conceptualization of a heartfelt investment, but at this stage in the analysis I was still staying conceptually ambiguous, trying to stay open to the potential ways that participants might convey their desires. At this time I created a coding log to track the emerging categories and codes from my review of interviews, field notes, and video content logs. The log was a living document that went through much iteration during data collection.

Coding analysis

As the MONT summer session wound to a close I began developing a more robust and rigorous coding scheme. This proceeded in three major steps: 1) first, with pens and paper copies, I conducted an initial round of open-ended coding of data segments from across the data corpus, starting with the field notes; 2) this led to a focused re-coding of the entire data set using NVivo software to refine codes and identify promising chunks for further analysis; 3) I then discerned categories as I wrote early drafts of the findings chapters, which were effectively memos. In doing so I explored these categories and considered how they illustrated and helped to develop conceptual features of desire from my framework (Eisenhardt, 1989; Charmaz, 2007).
From initial, open-ended coding to focused coding. From my initial analysis I had identified some promising directions for coding, though I was not ready to narrow the focus too much as I began to working with all of my data. As Charmaz (1995) recommends when using grounded theory, I reviewed data line-by-line and engaged in a semi-inductive process of open coding based on what seemed to be happening in CTP’s weekly seminar and MONT’s summer session courses. Rather than proceeding sequentially from the first to last day of data collection, I moved across the data set, starting at various time points in the collection corresponding roughly with the beginning, middle, and end of each program and alternately coding materials from CTP and MONT. This helped ensure that emerging codes and operationalized definitions would derive from both programs. For this coding development I used printouts of the data materials and colored pens to mark them up with codes and notes in the margins. This permitted me to quite literally see areas in the data that were lit up, so to speak, with brightly colored codes and marginalia. After the initial pass I went methodically through all of the content logs of seminars/courses from the two programs coding them by hand.

During open-ended coding I considered a number of concepts from my emerging framework (e.g., imagining, object, subject) as I tried to make sense of my data. The resulting list of codes from this effort is in Table 3.6. Along with codes for affect/emotional expression, I coded for expressions that might indicate desire (i.e., “I want...”). I also used many codes from CHAT based on my reading of the literature (notably Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) while trying to get a handle on the key systemic features of the programs that might be used as resources by participants to construct their understandings of the objects of activity. This included the albums of lesson plans at MONT and the teacher performance instrument at CTP. It also included conceptual tools, such as the terms “traditional” (MONT) and “data-driven” (CTP). For objects, I
began to develop a notion of directing in moments where it seemed that instructors were explicitly highlighting what they wanted the beginning teachers to attend to or keep in mind as teachers. For example, I noticed how the CTP instructors would often remind the beginners that their stress and efforts to teach were “for the kids.” I likewise wanted understand how the subjects talked about themselves or mentioned what it took to succeed as a teacher. At MONT, for example, instructors would tell the beginners that they needed to become “storytellers.” And at CTP participants would often refer to being “life-long learners” or the need to have a “learning mindset.”

With so many codes, I stepped back to decide which seemed more useful for addressing my research questions. Tensions emerged as I worked to decide how to narrow and refine my research questions. Tensions emerged as I worked to decide how to narrow and refine my

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codes. With CHAT, for example, I wondered how much of the system I should capture when it was really the subject-object dynamic that interested me. I did not want to completely abandon tools as things that could be objects of desire or for their possible role in mediating desire vis-à-vis the construction of objects. I conjectured that a beginner could invest his or her heart in teaching practices as practical tools (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999) while appropriating them. Rather than making fine grained distinctions between kinds of tools, I opted to code them as a block and then look later for the tools that came up most frequently or were co-coded with expressions of desire and thus worth greater attention. I also began to notice moments in the data where it seemed that the speaker was referring to the system as a whole, such as talking about Montessori while comparing it to a holistic impression of “traditional” schooling. This seemed to speak to the orienting narratives constructed and conveyed within a program, so I created a system-level code to account for these occurrences.

Though I knew that the subject and object codes mattered for my study in light of my framework, I needed to decide which aspects of these codes to attend to in my analysis. This would be partly resolved later when I began to categorize the objects of preparation activity and cross list the subject and object codes with expressions of desire. But at this stage of the analysis I wanted to make some distinctions and refine my definitions for the sake of clarity.

The “subject” was a broad code given the many different ways participants could talk about themselves or others. With an interest in discerning orienting narratives, I decided to note the moments where participants described their paths into teaching or their program. This could include moments like when a MONT beginner said, “I really didn’t seek out Montessori; it sought me out” [MONT-universe-063014]. I reserved the rest of the “subject” code for two kinds of moments in the data. The first was when a participant characterized what it meant to be a
member of a teaching community. For example, at one point Paula (MONT instructor) said to the cohort, “But Montessori teachers are the pickiest people on Earth, and every one of us thinks that we’re doing it the right way… and we want it our way” [MONT-philo-062414]. The second included self-references, such as when Mark (beginner at CTP) exclaimed to his peers in seminar, “That is what I want to be” [CTP-seminar-030614]! The MONT beginner’s comment (“…it sought me out.”) would fit this category, too, and the subject code distinctions were admittedly imperfect. Eventually I would collapse the code, but at this stage I found it useful to parse the different ways that the subject surfaced in the seminars/courses and interviews.

There were tensions with the object code as well. Notably, there was the tendency for the subject to be positioned as the object of activity. As discussed in the last chapter, preparation activity tends to be directed in part toward ideals and images of teaching. Thus, I was often coding certain comments as both subject and object. For example, after showing the CTP beginners a TED talk about the power of teachers in urban classrooms, Susan (instructor) restated the last line for emphasis: “We’re born to make a difference” [CTP-seminar-050814]. In this instance she appeared to be conveying an object, to be a teacher driven to have an impact, though she was also directing the beginners toward that object, positioning the image of teaching as worthwhile to consider. This positioning, or directing, seemed to be an important aspect of how orienting narratives emerged in the preparation settings and served to frame certain objects as desirable. I thus retained the object (directing) code.

Sometimes participants would share how they thought they might use a teaching practice or what the future could look and why it was more or less desirable. In such cases it seemed as though particular objects were being considered within participants’ imaginations, and I was reminded of Smith’s (2009) suggestion that desiring is partly an imaginative activity as possible
futures are envisioned and the heart is entreated to invest in what is imagined. The following exchange between two CTP beginners on having a certain principal for a boss illustrates this:

Ben: [The principal] was like, “I’m in charge. I’m talking. I don’t need to hear it. So you can just imagine if you’re in meetings, or you’re like talking with her— “This is what we’re doing … done.”

Mark: End of story.

Ben: End of story.

Mark: It’s not like a collaboration… Like, you’re my minion. You’re gonna teach that class—

Ben: This is what I saw, this is what you fix.

Mark: Yah, just like no real [motions back-forth with his hand] connection [CTP-seminar-030614].

As the two beginners riffed, they constructed a short narrative of what it could be like for them to work under a principal they perceived as strict and power-hungry. The larger object of activity in this case was getting hired, though they seemed to be conveying professional ideals—e.g., collaboration, connection, care—that were as much about themselves, what they valued, as whom they hoped to work for (and thus not work for). It was a desirable state of affairs (Schroeder, 2015) that they appeared to be co-construction and orienting themselves towards. In light of such moments I decided to merge “imagining” and “object” into a code—object (imagining)—to look for other such occurrences in the data.

Finally, after open coding I was confronted with a large volume of utterances coded as some form of emotional expression. Some of these comments I had come to see as expressing desire more directly through indications of what was “wanted” (e.g., “I want to be her!” or
“…we want it our way.”), but there were other terms and turns of phrase that I was unsure about. For example, could expressing that an object was “needed” be interpreted as an expression of desire? Consider the following statement by a MONT beginner from an interview:

I know that most [children] like to be outside and to explore... And it just reiterates how important nature is and how we need to appreciate that and respect it [in schools]. [Alex-int1-05:53]

She gives the impression of having a heartfelt connection to nature, which in turn seems to have her convinced that it is needed in schools. We might therefore assume that she desires schools that “appreciate and respect” nature. At the very least, the expression seemed to be an important piece in a crafting a coherent picture of what Alex might desire as a teacher, and I didn’t want to lose it or others like it. I therefore decided to code such comments as expressions of desire.

Along with establishing which language signaled desire, I had to formulate decision rules for expressions that conveyed positive/negative valences. At this point I was interested in moments where expressions of (dis)pleasure might be discouraged or amplified during social interactions in a way that might serve to “discipline” how participants desired certain things. For example, I had noticed how, at one point, Jason at CTP addressed beginners’ expressed negativity over working in difficult classrooms by telling them to find ways of cheering themselves up so they could continue stay committed to teaching. It thus seemed that he wanted them to stay positive about teaching so what it accomplished would retain its desirability. I thus wanted to track similar incidences where it seemed that participants addressed emotionality in way that seemed to discipline it and developed a code I called disciplining emotion.

While reviewing the coded data I also began to appreciate how certain expressions seemed to be conveying an attachment or connection between the speaker and a particular object.
For example, while describing her path into teaching Dawn told me, “I always loved the idea of teaching and have worked with children in special needs all through high school and I loved that” [Dawn-int1-00:34]. By her use of the term “love” she seemed to be indicating that something about teaching and working with children resonated with her. To really appreciate any desire she might have for teaching it thus seemed important to have such comments accessible in my later analyses.

As a way to makes sense of these possible languages of desire I compiled examples and composed a memo (Appendix C). From this memo I was better able to appreciate the subtlety with which desire might be communicated at my field sites. Indeed, I noted only one mention of the term “desire” in all of the interviews and 6 and 7 mentions of “desire” in data materials from the CTP weekly seminar and MONT courses respectively. By comparison, expressions of “wanting” often showed up multiple times in a single interview transcript or set of field notes from a seminar. Other terms, such as “wishing” and “looking forward to” were less common but also seemed to indicate the presence of desire. These terms seemed different from terms such as “love,” “like,” and “passion,” which conveyed heartfelt attachment but not necessarily desire. It could be possible, I reasoned, for someone to say that they loved something without desiring it in a given moment. Even so, they might have a heartfelt connection to that thing in a way that a desire could take shape around it in the right circumstances. I thus decided to code expressions that included terms such as “love,” “like,” or “passion” (along with their opposites) as expressions of emotion/affect but tag them as a distinct category of expressions conveying a possible heartfelt connection.

The initial, open-coding process helped me to develop a smaller and more refined set of codes with which to re-code the data. Those codes are in the second column of Table 3.6. To do
this re-coding more conveniently, especially as I prepared to write chapters, I uploaded all data materials into NVivo. This allowed me to watch segments of video while trying to make coding decisions and to transcribe moments in the seminars/courses where coded expressions of affect and desire were prevalent.

**From focused coding to categories, themes, and conceptual elaboration.** Even re-coded with fewer codes the number of examples for each code was fairly high (Table 3.6), and there were still unresolved issues I needed to address in my analysis to address my research questions, such as what to make of the positioning of the subject as an object. I also had several conceptual buckets that contained the same pieces of data, which suggested overlap that could be generative but needed to be systematically addressed.

To address my first research question on the objects and orienting narratives of the program, I thus engaged in a process of isolating data pieces of program leader and instructor comments from the subject, object, tools, and system-level categories that had also been tagged as containing expressions of desire or certain emotional/affective expressions (e.g., “I love”). For example, the following comment by a scholar visiting CTP had been coded as both an expression of desire, subject, and object (directing):

> If you want to team with others to improve situations and improve learning, and learn from other group together to improve education, then that’s what we want. [CTP-seminar-012314]

The desire came through in his mentioning of what “you want” and “what we want.” He also seemed to be conveying who they as teachers should want to be, which is why it reflected the subject code. And he was arguably directing them toward this idealized vision of what teachers in their professional community desired to accomplish through their work—an object of the
preparation activity that they should work to realize. When taken together, such comments seemed to be helping to establish an orienting narrative within a given preparation program.

Comments not tagged as expressing desire also seemed important. In the object (directing) category especially were comments that seemed intended to orient the beginning teachers towards particular objects of desire within a program. For example, Nancy (MONT instructor) reminded the beginners of what they were after as teachers by stating, “We don’t teach math, we teach children. We teach the whole child. Those subjects are just tools in our toolbox” [MONT-classlead-072414]. In another example, Jason (CTP instructor) informed his beginners, “[H]ow can you say it in a way that [suggests] you’re here for all students and you have these expectations for students to be successful” [CTP-seminar-011614]? Both comments drew attention to a major object of teaching within each program: addressing the whole child at MONT; instructing all students at CTP. Yet neither of the comments included discernible language of desire even though a desirable object was being conveyed. I therefore decided to look beyond expressions of desire or affect/emotion when trying to understand the orienting narratives within a program and how the beginners appeared to address those narratives.

While cross checking codes, I began pulling data to write chapter drafts. Doing so revealed how certain features of the preparation program were positioned as desirable and broader trends and themes began to emerge. While sorting through and trying to make sense of the data I found it helpful to refer to the literature on the guiding ideals of teacher preparation (i.e., Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999; Van Huizen, van Oers, & Wubbels, 2005) and to the heuristic I had established distinguishing the pedagogical object, ontological object, and generalized object of teaching. (These object types are defined in Table 3.7, which also includes other concepts I arrived at and used in the later stages of my analysis.) In the findings chapters I
elaborate on the objects and orienting narratives as they appeared through my analysis of both teacher preparation programs.

While addressing my first question I concurrently sought to address my second and third questions, which inquired into the possible desires of the beginners. For that I engaged in the same process of isolating data pieces that had been tagged as expressions of desire along with subject, object, tools, and system-level. I also isolated those pieces tagged as containing certain emotional/affective expressions (e.g., “I love”). For the beginners, this latter group of comments seemed rather important as a way of conveying what I came to call a **heartfelt investment**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Operational definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>Conveyed through expressions of wanting something. These expressions may also indicate what isn’t wanted or a strong preference that things be different. Can include instances where the term “desire” is used explicitly though can also include the terms (or derivatives of) “want,” “wish,” or “looking forward to.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing desire</td>
<td>Indications that a desire could be present, with an object in someone’s mind if not exactly on their mind in a way that appears to be making demands on their hearts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occurrent desire</td>
<td>Indications that a desire is present and active as an object seems to be on someone’s mind, preoccupying it in a way that appears to be making demands on their hearts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartfelt investment</td>
<td>Indicated by expressions that carry an emotional or affective valence, often through terms such as “love”, “like”, or “passionate,” that convey a degree of personal attachment or connection between a subject and something. Signs of affection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orienting narratives</td>
<td>Larger, overarching stories of what matters in a given setting that are established through the aggregation of many pieces of activity, and specifically comments made across a range of activities, that appear to render an object or objects as desirable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalized object of teaching</td>
<td>Moments when individuals express the purposes or future outcomes that should (or are) toward which affective energy and efforts to discipline desire should be channeled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontological object</td>
<td>Expressions of self or efforts to frame or define how individuals should be (as the ‘subject’ in the system). Often signaled by the use of first person pronouns (e.g., I, me, my). This can include details on individual participants—where they come from; how they frame their prior experiences in schools and their reasons for entering their respective programs. Also, includes clues to their personal lives and preferred activities. Connections to prior understanding or way of thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical object</td>
<td>Mention of the concepts—the key terms, ideas, and definitions—and practice around which participants within a program come to understand their work and develop an image of what it will accomplish. This can include materials (e.g., instructional frameworks, books/texts, digital technology, handouts, binders, pens/pencils, etc.).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.7 Conceptual categories used for discerning themes and interpreting data.
Comments such as this one from Dawn (CTP beginner)—“I always loved the idea of teaching…” [Dawn-int1-00:34]—helped me to consider how the beginning teachers might be expressing desire in other ways than expressing wants. They might also be conveying heartfelt attachments to certain objects of teaching that could influence what they desired of the work. For example, at MONT it appeared that an important generalized object of teaching was Montessori’s cosmic vision of a peaceful society. At one point after an instructor read the cohort a children’s book on the world’s creation stories a beginner exclaimed, “I love ‘Wonderful world!’ as a greeting and just the idea that cosmic energy hopefully instills that sense of awe—‘Wonderful world!’—in all of us” [MONT-philo-070814]. A comment like this indicated the possibility of the beginner’s heartfelt investment in the program’s generalized object. In the findings chapters I present and explore comments like this to consider what the beginners’ hearts seemed invested in and what they perhaps desired.

A final conceptual distinction that I turned to as a way of teasing apart the multiplicity of desire and how desires might be experienced and activated was Schroeder’s (2015) notion of *occurrent* versus *standing* desires. Standing desires are present but latent in the individual, while occurrent desires are active and driving the individual in a given moment. This distinction proved especially helpful in trying to make sense of a category of beginners’ comments in which they mentioned the possibility of leaving teaching. I also found it helpful for understanding what orienting narratives might be trying to accomplish in teacher preparation—e.g., to establish occurrent desires within the beginners so they aim to fulfill certain ideals and achieve certain outcomes.
Validity

During my analysis I did two things to check my emerging codes and thoughts about the data. First, I met with committee members at several points to discuss memos I had written and data moments that I had pulled based on my evolving coding framework. In these meetings my interpretations of what I thought I was seeing were challenged in ways that pushed me to seek further conceptual elaboration through further data analysis and reviews of the literature.

Second, at the beginning stages of my initial, open coding of the data, I enlisted two external reviewers who used my coding scheme to code segments of data transcripts from CTP and MONT. Both reviewers were given the codebook to examine prior to meeting with me individually. At these individual meetings we co-coded segments of the data and then discussed our coding choices. They then independently coded additional segments of the data on their own time. We then met again, this time all together, and proceeded to compare and justify our coding choices.

Through this process I was able to refine my codes and what I was after in my analysis. For example, early on I had been interested in expressions of affect, which I thought might offer clues to the presence of pleasure/displeasure around an object of activity that could signal whether or not that object was desired. The reviewers saw this as too broad of a code and raised the issue of what to make of talk about affective states not necessarily exhibited by the speaker. To illustrate, a reviewer pointed to following moment in the data when a CTP instructor advises the beginning teachers:

The reviewer observed that the instructor wasn’t saying he loved kids or was passionate but was talking about how others might express such sentiments. We discussed how the terms like love and passion could reasonably be interpreted to carry an affective valence when used in reference to one’s self (i.e., “I love” or “I am passionate”). But in such a moment it did not seem that the speaker was exhibiting those affective states and we agreed that such instances should not be coded as affect. This begged the question of how to code such expressions, and we discussed how the instructor seemed to be coaching the beginners on how to justify what they loved with specific examples. Thus, the more intriguing insight from such a comment was the instructor’s mentioning of an object of love or passion—in this case it was the “kids” and wanting to serve them through their teaching. It therefore made sense to code such a comment as object (directing).

**Presentation of findings**

In the next three chapters I present my study findings. I have elected to present findings by program, starting with CTP in Chapter 4 and then MONT in Chapter 5, to permit a thorough dive into the possible desires and tensions within each program. In both of these chapters I present what I have been referring to as orienting narratives and an exploration of the generalized object of teaching, pedagogical object, and ontological object as conveyed by program leaders. Each object presentation is followed by an exploration of comments made by the beginning teachers’ in interviews and seminar/courses in which the object came up, and how those comments might be suggestive of a heartfelt investment and perhaps desire for the object. In Chapter 6, I explore the theme of leaving teaching through the conceptual lens of desire, specifically with assistance from the distinction between standing and occurrent desire.
There are five Great Lessons that have different names depending on the source, though they address 1) the formation of the universe and earth, 2) the development of life, 3) the arrival of human beings, 4) the evolution of symbolic communication, and 5) the use of numbers. I was only able to see the Universe and Language Great Lessons.

Jacqueline Cossentino (2009) has suggested that these albums are the lifeblood of the Montessori culture, serving as the major mode of transmitting the tradition to new initiates. They provide instructions for using the finely crafted lesson materials, which are also an important part of Montessori instruction (Cossentino, 2005). As the instructors informed the beginning teachers, they are designed to be didactic by engaging children in tasks—e.g., matching cards, arranging objects, composing sentences, etc.—that lead to learning as they are mastered. But they are also designed to stir children’s curiosity through careful attention to aesthetic appearances. “The materials are really beautiful”, an instructor commented. “They’re very attractive” [MONT-math-061714]. In fact, the materials could prove so alluring that the instructors offered advice on how to direct students to other materials and how to have enough resources on hand in the classroom to, as Jeff (Universe instructor) put it, “drive them in their passion” [MONT-universe-070114].”
Chapter 4: City Teacher Prep

Orienting Narratives & Signs of CTP Beginners’ Heartfelt Investment

In this chapter and the next I take each teacher preparation program in turn and primarily address my first two research questions: What objects are rendered desirable through the orienting narratives evident in a given teacher preparation program? In what ways do beginning teachers appear to be investing their hearts in the desired objects framed within the orienting narratives of their preparation program? Doing so, I also touch upon my third question by revealing a few examples of multiple and competing objects of desire within each preparation program.

In my analysis of City Teacher Prep (CTP), the orienting narratives I teased out from the comments of program leaders conveyed a sense that the preferred teacher (ideal subject) desired to serve rather than save students in underserved communities (generalized object of teaching). That teacher also desired to raise student achievement with data-driven instruction and effective classroom management (pedagogical object), and wanted to be true to him or herself while making an effort to be growth-oriented and positive (ontological object) (Figure 4.1). As discussed in the second chapter, I am assuming that in practice and within the imaginations of program participants these objects overlap and inform one another. I also assume that objects, as socially constructed ideals, can be imbued with multiple shades of interpretation. In the study I have teased apart the object of teacher preparation activity for heuristic purposes to reveal a more textured landscape of desire in which beginning teachers were invited to invest their hearts in a multifaceted vision of what teaching is and can achieve. Below, I bring each object into focus in turn and offer evidence from CTP’s weekly seminar of how program
instructors and other leaders (i.e., school principals, district administrators, etc.) established the contours of these objects and conveyed what a heartfelt investment in them might entail. For each object I focus on the comments of CTP beginners, especially the interviewed focal beginners, to consider how they may have been investing their hearts in the object and perhaps desired it.

**Generalized object(s) of teaching at CTP**

*An orienting narrative of serving rather than saving students in underserved communities*

In line with my framework, while immersed in CTP, especially the weekly seminar, I was sensitive to indications of a generalized object of teaching that might be guiding the beginning teachers’ learning activity. Over the course of the program it seemed that program leaders were working to cultivate the beginners’ capacity to provide a rationale for why one chose to teach...
and become a teacher. For example, when asked what she looked for in the teachers she hired, a principal who was visiting the program said that she wanted to know “what led you to this profession” and she wanted assurances that “it was a very intentional choice” presumably done for the right reasons [CTP-seminar-022014]. Qualifying her meaning, she added, “So what was the reason—what was your calling—you know? What drove you into the teaching profession?” There are presumably many ways one could answer this question, though in listening to program leaders over the course of the weekly seminar it seemed that not any answer would suffice, and the preferred response would be some variation on the following theme: to serve the needs of students in underserved communities.

Indeed, the syllabus for the weekly seminar listed as core questions, “Whom do I serve? How do I serve” [CTP-seminar-syllabus]? During CTP’s weekly seminar, the instructors would sometimes remind beginners that what they did as beginning teachers should be for the students. When in an October seminar, for example, a beginner questioned top-down reforms, Jason (seminar instructor) responded that those reforms were “for the kids, not for us” [CTP-seminar-100313]. In a “temperature check” discussion the following week, Jason again directed their attention to students by encouraging the beginners to consider the “impact that [they’re] making on urban kids” and how this compared to teaching done in wealthier districts [CTP-seminar-101013]. He ventured that teachers in those districts would be amazed by what they deal with and again noted the importance of teaching students in the urban districts, asking rhetorically, “That’s what you’re here for, right?” In a late February seminar this message was reinforced when the instructors had the beginners read and reflect on a passage from Stephen Farr’s (2010) teaching manual, *Teaching as Leadership*, in which Farr argues,
For highly effective teachers … the important things are students, their success, and their future. We see that effective execution is driven by the high stakes of our work and an intense desire to broaden opportunities for children who have been unjustly deprived of them. (p. 146)

The message thus seemed to be that a heartfelt investment in teaching—an “intense desire”—required teachers to maintain perspective on the larger purpose of urban education, the “students, their success, and their future.” In fact, Jason appeared to be pointing out that, if their hearts were in the right place, they should be able to step back and take comfort in that purpose.

During the weekly seminar instructors referred to this generalized object of teaching as a way to proceed instructionally and ensure that, as teachers, they always had the students’ interests in mind. For example, during a discussion on how to map backwards when designing a lesson, Jason encouraged them to always ask themselves “Why do they need to learn this?” rather than asking “What do I think they should learn” [CTP-seminar-101713]? Lauren (instructor) agreed, adding that the latter question led to lessons based on information that was “nice to know” and fun for the teacher but not good for the students’ educational advancement. As an example of what not to do, she told a story of a teacher who persisted in doing a monarch butterfly unit even though it did not address district standards for her grade-level.

Program leaders also conveyed that a heart invested in teaching for the kids would view teaching as an act of service rather than an effort to save them. There was some indication that they had discussed this at the outset of the program, though during my time observing the program it came up mostly in the winter as the program prepared beginners to interview for teaching positions. For example, at one point in a January seminar a visiting professor said to the assembled cohort,
As you know … a myth of urban education [is] that a bunch of folks are gonna come in and save those poor people in these neighborhoods … If that’s what you’re thinking about doing, get out. Nobody wants you to save them. People don’t need saving. If you want to team with others to improve situations and improve learning, and learn from other group together to improve education, then that’s what we want. [CTP-seminar-012314]

As he framed it, the generalized object of teaching was thus to collaborate in a team that afforded opportunities for mutual learning among the members. He also discussed serving as what the members of his envisioned professional community desired—“what we want”—versus what he claimed “nobody want[ed]”, which was a savior.

In another instance, while coaching the beginners on how to discuss their passion for teaching, the CTP instructors advised them to be careful with how they talked about students in urban settings. As Jason asked them to consider,

So yes they may be disadvantaged or yes—they may not have the same opportunities or resources as other students, but how can you say it in a way that [suggests] you’re here for all students and you have these expectations for students to be successful? And that won’t change regardless of where you are. [CTP-seminar-011614]

As a suggestion, he proposed that they say things along the lines of, “I want to help students in urban settings be contributors to their communities.” Lauren then reminded them of the difference between the “save versus serve mentality” and recommended to “[k]eep that in your mind so your comments don’t come across as, ‘I want to save these kids.’” Giving that impression, she observed, could “rub some people the wrong way.”
Finally, my analysis suggested that CTP program leaders wanted to convey that, with the right mindset, investing one’s heart in serving students should make teaching a source of pleasure. For example, during a panel presentation on how to interview effectively for teaching positions, one principal on the panel remarked,

For me more than anything you better have some enthusiasm for this. I think everyone up here can agree that … it’s so hard, the work that we’re doing, but it feels really, really good. [CTP-seminar-022014]

The tradeoff for the hard work of teaching should thus be a sense of satisfaction, and at times in the seminar the program leaders seemed to be coaching the beginners on how to find that satisfaction. In October, for example, when the beginners expressed despondency over the stress of teaching, Jason told them how he had taught for many years and saw firsthand how “urban settings eat people up” [CTP-seminar-101013]. He warned the beginners against expecting principals, colleagues, or students to step in and make them feel better. Instead, he recommended that they learn to “affirm” themselves and posed the question, “How can you go and get [affirmation] and seek it for yourself?” To do this, he advised them to step back and appreciate the small victories of teaching. He told them, “Don’t minimize your wins…See what you did that day and keep pushing. Keep pushing.” Indeed, to sustain forward motion—to persist when feeling devoured by the demands of the classroom—seemed to be why CTP program leaders wanted the beginners to keep the generalized object of teaching in focus. What they seemed to be conveying was that a desire to serve children in urban settings required a heart that could take comfort in daily accomplishments no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.

In line with my framework and third research question, I want to note the possibility of other orienting narratives offered by CTP program leaders directed at other generalized objects
of teaching. For example, there was some suggestion that program leaders had engaged the cohort in discussions about their role in increasing the status of teaching. During a résumé workshop in seminar, one beginner took issue with the instructors’ insistence that they include an objective, a concern he justified by stating,

> On a whole bigger level, we’ve talked about trying to elevate the teaching profession as a whole for the entire country. I think if you continue to use the term “objective” it continues to hold the entire profession down. [CTP-seminar-010914]

I did not witness the conversation he was referring to, nor was I privy to lengthier discussions on the topic, and I wondered if perhaps they had talked about the status of teaching earlier in the program or in another graduate course. This possibility of a second generalized object of teaching raised the question of the primacy or perhaps prioritization of such objects within a program community. The fact that the object I identified in the data—teaching to serve rather than save students—was more visible in the observed discourse and during interviews pointed to its relative significance compared to other objects, though I cannot be certain that CTP participants thought of it as such. It could be that professional status figured more prominently at the start of the program and then gave way to the object I observed. Regardless, the brief mention of elevating teaching’s status offered evidence suggestive of the presence of multiple objects in the CTP setting, some of which may have been latent and less visible or were not captured in my data.

In summary, CTP’s program leaders were observed focusing the beginners’ attention on serving students in underserved communities. They also conveyed the sense that a beginner with a heart invested in this generalized object of teaching would be sensitive to and perhaps resistant to the notion of teachers “saving” students. Program leaders also offered some suggestion that a
heart invested in service would take pleasure in the small victories of working with students in urban schools and thus find comfort in knowing that their stress was worth it—something endured “for the kids.”

*Indications of beginners’ heartfelt investment in CTP’s generalized object of teaching*

The CTP beginners had little to no teaching experience or training, but Mark told me that what they had in common was “this tremendous passion to do something” important in their professional lives [Mark-int1-46:13]. Through my analysis of the comments made by the focal CTP beginners I did indeed notice several signs of a heartfelt investment in the program’s generalized object of teaching suggesting that they desired to serve students in underserved communities. In the “philosophy of education” statements that they were required to compose in preparation for job interviewing, for example, they wrote of how much they wanted to support students and help them succeed [CTP-seminar-011614]. In his statement Ben wrote,

> It is my desire as an educator to help students meet their fullest potential … by providing an environment that is safe, supports risk-taking, and invites a sharing of ideas. [Ben-CTP-philosophy statement]

Such indications of a heartfelt investment in CTP’s object of teaching were most evident during the first round of interviews (November-December, 2013) of beginners as they discussed their paths into teaching. Some beginners talked about how entering teaching reflected a desire to serve people more generally or make a positive difference. For example, Ryan had been in the service industry working as a barista when he started to have doubts about this career path. As he explained, “I found myself questioning my direction and what I wanted to do … I know I wanted to work with people, I know I like making people feel good—having a positive impact” [Ryan-
int-02:13]. He went on to note how his choice to teach emerged from this larger investment in “making people feel good.”

This was also the case with Dawn, who described how she had narrowed a broad desire to serve others down to a desire to serve children through public education. As she told it, her professional story started with a “childhood dream” that had been “in the back of [her] mind” for a while [Dawn-int1-00:27]. “I always loved the idea of teaching”, she told me in our first interview, recalling how she had “loved” working with special needs children in high school. But then she “diverged off that path” and went into economics, eventually working with a firm that provided data analytics. The work initially reaffirmed her heart’s broader commitment to serve others. “I really started churning my thinking like how can I really best help people,” she explained, “because that is my ultimate goal” [Dawn-int1-00:27]. She mentioned how economic research failed to register on an emotional level and she reconnected with the path of teaching. As she explained,

I think I mentally and emotionally started transitioning day one of that job [in economics] … I was like, “Oh, shoot this does not feel right” … I just felt like I’m not helping anything doing this and then I thought, “Well maybe I could do education research.” But ultimately I decided that actually being on the ground, with schools with the children was the best way to reach my goal of helping communities, helping kids and helping their lifelong trajectory. [Dawn-int1-03:13]

Dawn thus articulated a purpose for teaching that echoed CTP’s object of teaching, describing that purpose as a “goal” in which she would help kids and communities. She offered further indication that her heart was invested in the program’s object of teaching when I pressed her about these goals. As Dawn explained, “My ultimate goal is to come into a classroom and
feel, at the end of the day, my students will be better fifteen years down the line, because we were together in a classroom” [Dawn-int1-23:15]. She then expressed a deep concern over the negative experiences that many students had in school and hoped that, by having her as a teacher, they could one day say,

I hated school, I didn’t think I was doing anything with my life and then I had a teacher who changed it for me and I was able to push myself further, because of it. I was able to achieve more. [Dawn-int1-25:08]

She considered this “a very ideal, day-dreamy impact” and was sensitive to the program’s insistence that they not see themselves as saviors. “I’m not trying to save anybody,” she insisted, “but I am trying to help [students] experience school in a way that makes them feel they have possibilities” [Dawn-int1-25:49].

As with Dawn, James seemed to arrive at CTP with a heartfelt investment in making a difference in students’ lives. But even more so than Dawn or any other beginner I interviewed, he seemed invested in addressing the roots of the racial injustice. As a man of color, he said that he could relate to the experiences of the students of color in his residency classroom. In our first interview James mentioned the problems he saw in education, and when I asked him what he found problematic, he replied,

Inequities in terms of behavior management or more specifically, the way that we handle black boys in education or the way that I've seen black boys handled in education.

[James-int1-07:14]

He went on to mention how he brought this issue up in his graduate courses because he was “totally obsessed” with racial injustice [James-int1-09:35]. James’ said his obsession was motivated by what he saw at his residency school but also his own experience having been
mislabeled and placed in special education as a child. James thus seemed fully invested in the object of serving students from underserved communities. In fact, his heart appeared to be so into it that it frustrated him that CTP did not seem as committed to social justice as he felt they should be.

As with Dawn and James, Sarah also seemed to have a heartfelt investment in CTP’s object of teaching that preceded her joining the program. In an interview she told me how she was initially interested in marine science and, though captivated by the work, did not enjoy the prospect of “years of writing grants, years behind a computer, absolutely closed off” [Sarah-int1-00:21]. Working as a nanny revealed the pleasures of assisting children and she decided to pursue a Master’s degree in education. She started a graduate program but had to leave it after a few weeks. Though brief, the explained that the experience inspired her to think of teaching, “Yes, that’s what I wanna do” [Sarah-int1-02:32]! She also saw it reinforcing her interest in serving children most in need. When I asked her why this student demographic attracted her, she replied:

I come from a family of social workers. I like to think that's where it comes from. Just where I can make the most impact, where I'd have the biggest splash, where I was needed the most, I think. [Sarah-int1-05:09]

Sarah said that she saw this “need” in the many “sad days” in her practicum classroom where the turmoil of her students’ lives surfaced. Like Dawn, she understood her role as limited but capable of offering hope. “You can't save them”, she remarked, “but you certainly can give them something to hold on to…” [Sarah-int1-32:44]. Sarah thus seemed to have some investment in making a difference and awareness that teaching was less about saving than serving. But unlike
James, her sense of service did not seem as rooted in a desire for social justice, as least as she entered teaching.

For Elizabeth the broader issue of injustice also seemed relatively new and had only started taking hold of her heart through her time at CTP. In the first interview she described the pleasure of teaching in urban settings by stating,

I love that seeing how powerful teaching can be, if done correctly, just the growth and just feeling like everyday I leave here and I feel like, it's just so gratifying. I feel like I actually made an impact and a difference. [Elizabeth-int1-01:54]

Like Dawn, she indicated a sense of satisfaction in making a difference through teaching. The drive to teach for something greater—to not only serve underserved students but to do so for the sake of addressing the underlying injustice—surfaced in our second interview as she described herself as being “changed” by her experiences. As she explained,

Before … I thought that I wanted to be a teacher like from where I came from, in the suburbs … This program has really changed my political views, just the inequities of education. And, I feel, especially in Title I schools, it’s … so unfair that kids that come from lower socio-economic status are given crappy teachers. And, a lot of teachers have that mentality of, “Oh, well, they’re getting something better than they could.” I just feel so strongly about the inequity and I want to be a small chunk in trying to change that…

[Elizabeth-int2-16:50]

Elizabeth’s irritation at a perceived “mentality” among less invested teachers and her indication of feeling “so strongly” about inequity suggested that she was developing a heartfelt investment in issues of injustice and perhaps coming to more fully desire to fulfill the program’s object of teaching.

Chapter 4
Unlike her peers, Kelsey did not indicate having arrived at CTP with a heart invested in serving children or making a difference. Rather, she chose teaching to find greater career satisfaction. As she told me in our first interview, after college she found herself in a confining office job that she “hated” and decided to try teaching. After three months in her practicum classroom Kelsey described teaching as “the hardest thing [she’d] ever done, but the most rewarding” [Kelsey-int1-07:47]. Qualifying how hard teaching had been for her during her first few months in the residency, she explained, “I left solo teaching recently and I went home and I cried all night” [Kelsey-int1-09:31]. But then she described how she lifted herself up, which led to her describing what she enjoyed about teaching. As she explained,

And when I finally snapped out of it (snaps her fingers), I was like, “That was ridiculous” ... unless you've done it you can’t really explain it: how you get to see the kids grow and how much they adore you and love you and how much they miss you when they’re not with you. When something clicks. Or when they read more words per minute. Or whatever the case may be. It's like ... there’s ten goods that come with one bad. Or you have a bad day and you've got to come back the next day and you can flip it around. Next day may be terrible, too. But at some point it turns around. I mean, they’re little people. They’re learning. And lots of them don’t have the lifestyle I had growing up or maybe support at home. A lot of them have gone through way more stuff than I dream I will be. So being someone just that they can come to, and they’re excited to see you every morning. Yah, it’s so much work, but … I would so much rather do this than an office job where … where I’m stuck in a cube all day. [Kelsey-int1-09:31]

In such a comment Kelsey appeared to be finding a positive narrative for why the work of teaching was worth her tears. This partly entailed comparing teaching to an “office job,” and
following this comment she furthered this contrast by noting how people worked for the pleasure of getting bonuses and promotions but the hard work of teaching enabling the satisfaction of selfless service. As she explained,

None of it is about me. It’s totally about giving to the school or to the community or to the kids. It’s feeling like, you’re doing something that’s worthwhile. And while you don’t receive any credit for it ... I don’t need that. I need the kids to feel like I’m there for them, and I need them to know they can talk to me. Yah, that’s what get’s me going. Like, I’d much rather take care of other people than worry about myself. [Kelsey-int1-11:19]

Kelsey thus plays up what she saw as a virtue of “giving” one’s self over to teaching and not needing recognition for that service. However, her strong tilt to one side of the selfless-selfish spectrum suggested an effort at overcorrection, and it seemed to me that Kelsey might be talking herself into the value of CTP’s object of teaching. Unlike Dawn or James, who seemed to enter into teaching with a surer sense that they wanted to make a difference, Kelsey seemed to be finding that sense of purpose along with a heartfelt investment in it as the residency year unfolded.

Kelsey’s comments helped reveal to me how CTP’s generalized object of teaching could be employed as a coping mechanism to buoy the heart in stressful times. It appeared that the program’s stress level was somewhat unexpected. Kelsey admitted to being “shocked” when she started CTP and remarked in our first interview, “I had no idea how much teachers worked … I had no idea what I was in for entering the program” [Kelsey-int1-07:47]. Later in the interview she elaborated on the stress and its impact on her life by stating,

I could work seven days a week, twenty hours a day, and still not be done. Because if I made five positive home calls every day, or I did tutoring, or I had a parent night once a
week, the list goes on and on and-on-and-on-and-on-and-on. But that stresses me out. So as many things as I have on a list to do next year and try, I also am afraid of getting burnt out quickly and not really knowing how to pace myself. I feel like this year has been a constant battle with my personal life and work, and I feel like next year is going to be more of the same, which is kind of taxing, I guess. But I am excited. But I also I can see why teacher burnout is so high. [Kelsey-int1-24:15]

Her fear of getting burned out seemed to be the result of not only assessing her current situation but also imagining what the future held. Other CTP beginners mentioned being similarly taken aback by the stress of the program. As Mark told me, “I didn’t know ahead of time how much work this whole experience was going to be” [Mark-int1-33:46]. According to Sarah, such reactions were common among the beginners. As she told me, “I think this program shocked a lot of people in my cohort, the level of distress and so much work” [Sarah-int1-15:17]. Given the stress, appealing to a heartfelt investment in serving students may have therefore been a way of staying focused and committed.

This seemed to be the case with Mark. In our first interview he noted experiencing some struggles with teaching. By the second interview he had been confronted by program leaders regarding his poor performance and he worried that he might be asked to leave the program. Even in a dark period he seemed guided by a desire to fulfill the program’s generalized object of teaching. As he explained to me,

I can still succeed in the program and do what I need to do to graduate and give the kids the best education that I can, but it has nothing to do with CTP at this point. That is strictly because I chose the profession to help kids. CTP is helping me get there, at least in theory—they put me in the classroom in the first place, so I owe them that. … And I
wanted to be their poster boy: not the best academic student, not the smartest candidate, not the best, but I love it because it allows me to do something I really wanted to, and something I still really want to do. [Mark-int2-37:45]

Mark did not dispute that his teaching needed improvement. It seemed to bother him, though, that his heartfelt commitment to serving students was not acknowledged. He went on to contend that he needed more direct feedback on his teaching than he had been receiving. Without it, he seemed to feel that he could not make good on his desire to teach. And indeed, when switched to another mentor, his instruction and his spirits appeared to improve (see Appendix D for a memo detailing Mark’s situation).

Ryan had had a similar experience to Mark. In our only interview, he mentioned how he also struggled to improve as a teacher. He then described himself as having a “common core” that “aligned” him to his mentor teacher even when it seemed to him that they shared different visions of a successful classroom. As he explained,

She loves her kids … [and] that’s where we really related. The care that we both projected onto the students … that was our big relating aspect. [Ryan-int-32:47]

After being counseled out of the program in March, Ryan acknowledged how his poor teaching jeopardized this “common core” of teaching by stating, “Ultimately it’s not fair to the kids, and that’s why we’re here—we’re here for the students…” [Ryan-int-10:34]. Ryan thus understood the program’s generalized object of teaching as conveyed by program leaders. He also saw himself as sharing a heartfelt investment in it. But as I’ll reveal later in the chapter, he considered himself at odds with his mentor when it came to how a teacher should be in service to children.

The data I have presented in this section is from interviews of the focal beginners. Noticeably absent were moments from the weekly seminar where CTP beginners explicitly
mentioned the generalized object of teaching I have identified. In my data corpus it came up exclusively in the interviews, and comments from all eight focal beginners revealed that their hearts were invested in serving students from underserved communities. Three of those beginners—Dawn, James, and Sarah—seemed to enter the program already oriented toward this generalized object of teaching and specifically on serving students of color in urban settings, while beginners such as Elizabeth showed signs of a heart becoming increasingly invested in this object. Presumably this sample of CTP beginners was not unique among their cohort. Thus, while the identified generalized object of teaching was not observed in the comments of beginners during the seminars, it is a fair assumption that, as a whole, the cohort of CTP beginners were invested or at least becoming invested in serving underserved students and desired that their teaching fulfill this object.

**Pedagogical object(s) at CTP**

*An orienting narrative of raising student achievement through data-driven instruction and effective classroom management*

Investing one’s heart in serving students was one thing; it was another thing to realize it through one’s teaching. Jason pointed this out while coaching the beginners on how to distinguish themselves from other job candidates while interviewing. As he explained, “Every teacher says they’re passionate. I’m passionate. I’m passionate. I’m passionate. But they never say how or why” [CTP-seminar-011614]. During the weekly seminar Jason and other program leaders offered many ways to show one’s passion, offering suggestions to arrive early to school every morning, attend school functions, and reach out to parents. But the instructional practices that got the most time and attention in the weekly seminar were those aimed at increasing student achievement and closing the achievement gap, a problem highlighted in CTP’s program.
literature. To fulfill the pedagogical aim of raising achievement, program leaders emphasized two major practices.

The first broad practice was data-driven instruction. It appeared that CTP was responding to the demand of its partner district for more teachers capable of data-driven instruction. Noting how too few teachers in the district could (or would) use data effectively, Lauren stressed how CTP wanted its beginning teachers to lead the “habit of mind shift” in instructional focus [CTP-seminar-101713]. She remarked that the program did not want the teachers it trained to do “business as usual” and sought to implement data-driven instruction through “small steps, 75 people at a time.” Program leaders told the beginning teachers that they were an “elite” group and, in the words of a district administrator, “different from other novice teachers” in their capacity to understand and use data-driven instruction [CTP-seminar-012314]. Likewise, the syllabus for the weekly seminar asked them to consider how to become a “change agent” in the district [CTP-seminar-syllabus].

One way the program appeared to direct the CTP beginners to its desired pedagogical object was through explicit training in data literacy. That data could be demographic information and standardized test averages for schools, which they were required to access and have in mind when interviewing for teaching positions. Data could also refer to measures of student achievement gathered by teachers to assess their students’ progress toward meeting standards-based targets. During weekly seminars in the fall the instructors engaged the beginners in activities to develop their proficiency at using software to record, monitor, and report students’ scores on classwork. Students brought in samples of achievement data from assessments they had given in their classrooms and spent time considering ways to interpret and report it. Then in two spring seminars the instructors had the beginners revisit data literacy to reflect on their
weaknesses and strengths with using achievement data to improve instruction. Guiding this reflection was a rubric\(^3\) with which the beginners assessed themselves on their data literacy skills. Examples of high-level indicators on the rubric included:

“The teacher can explain the importance of using multiple types of academic and competency data as part of a body of evidence to inform instructional decisions at the classroom and individual level.”

“The teacher chooses and/or creates classroom, school, district/cmo (charter management organization), state and federal level assessments to gather multiple types of data to evaluate student academic growth and competencies.”

“The teacher creates or chooses a student data system. The teacher collects, inputs, and stores student data daily, weekly, and monthly into a data system.”

“The teacher utilizes data to set short term and long term goals for students, classroom, school and district/cmo, independently and with colleagues.”

After assessing themselves for each indicator, the beginners broke into small groups based on the three following areas of strength: “manage student data, collect student data, enact data driven instruction” [CTP-seminar-050114]. The instructors had them share their weaknesses and offer strategies, which they posted on an online chat board.

Data could also refer to information gathered on their instruction from formal observations of their teaching and their own systematic review of classroom video of their teaching. This data was usually coupled with data from assessments of student learning to identify areas for instructional improvement. For example, during a “problem of practice”

\(^3\) The data literacy rubric, an Excel file I accessed via the CTP web portal, seemed to be something created by program leaders, though it is possible that it was modified from an existing scheme.
assignment in the winter they were asked to collect pre-, during, and post- data on their teaching and student learning. An instructor informed them that the purpose of the task was to “offer an opportunity to go deep into an area of your practice” [CTP-seminar-010914].

Besides improving their teaching quality, program leaders noted how a familiarity with data-driven instruction would help the beginners get hired. For example, a visiting district administrator told the beginners to avoid bringing creative portfolios to job interviews and instead to bring evidence of their comfort using data. To illustrate she recalled one interview where a CTP beginner started by stating, “I believe data is really important and you have to have feedback to know how you are doing” [CTP-seminar-012314]. This beginner then opened up her data book and showed it to the committee. To show her approval of this decision, the visiting administrator looked up to the ceiling and made an angelic sounding “Awww!” noise.

Along with data-driven instruction, the program also drew attention to its desired pedagogical object by stressing classroom management practices that would increase students’ content acquisition and hence their achievement scores. According to one beginner, program leaders frequently told them that “time’s really valuable” and a “finite resource” that should be maximized when teaching [Ben-intl-16:55]. While observing seminar, the CTP instructors appeared to model this attentiveness to time by using large digital timers and establishing clear time expectations for seminar tasks. Coupled with an efficient use of time was an emphasis on behavior management. According to program literature and instructors, the first several months of the program were devoted to discussing and practicing management techniques to get and maintain students’ attention and ensure quality time-on-task. To provide additional strategies, the instructors had the beginners read and discuss passages from Stephen Farr’s (2010) *Teaching as*
Leadership text. In the text, Farr treats teaching as an act of leadership and highlights best management practices for classrooms derived from the business literature.3

The residency experience reinforced CTP’s pedagogical object by providing the beginners with many opportunities to employ their developing skills with data literacy and effective classroom management. While visiting to give a seminar on grading, the district’s director of assessment strongly encouraged the beginners to participate in “data team meetings” at their host schools to become familiar with how standardized test data was used to shape school-wide instructional initiatives [CTP-seminar-020614]. Indeed, at the schools I visited—Fieldstone and Downtown Elementary—several weeks were given over to standardized testing, and the beginners joined the faculty as they met regularly on in-service days to discuss student achievement data. The specific nature of these data meetings was unclear, though once when visiting Elizabeth at Fieldstone for an interview I met her in the school library where she and the entire faculty were shuffling through hundreds of tests. Elizabeth told me that the teachers were in grade-level teams grading a test the school independently administered to assess its progress in literacy and math so teachers could address shortcomings before students took the major state test.

At the schools I observed, CTP beginners were urged by mentors to make the best use of classroom time and maximize students’ time-on-task. To curb distractions, they were expected to use a no-nonsense approach to behavior management that stressed the establishment and respectful enforcement of high standards of personal conduct. As the principal at Downtown Elementary phrased it, the approach required teachers to balance being “warm and strict” [CTP-seminar-022014]. At both schools, student conduct was constantly monitored with a system where clothespins with students’ names on them were moved from green (good) to yellow,
orange, and red (bad). Maintaining order seemed important, and the hallways were usually quiet as teachers marched their students silently in straight lines between destinations.

At Fieldstone and Downtown Elementary schools, the pedagogical focus on data-driven instruction and classroom management seemed to be part of a larger effort to cultivate a school culture of academic success. Students at both schools wore uniforms (collared shirts, khakis, skirts, and slacks reminiscent of the dress-code at CTP) and teachers often referred to children as “scholars.” In classrooms, grade-level mastery goals were posted alongside goals for good behavior and respectful participation, and even kindergarten students had their advancement in reading and math made visible on charts displayed on classroom walls. In one room, for example, placards with students’ names were tacked to the stalk of a flower at various heights according to students’ progress at reaching reading standards. Also, teachers were encouraged to show strong identification with their personal academic success by prominently displaying college degrees and graduation pictures in their classrooms. The elementary school hallways were likewise lined with college pennants and hand-made posters touting the importance of college. The message was thus that college was a goal—the reward for high achievement—and arguably an important component of the pedagogical object motivating instruction.

In this sense, the goal of college, as something relatively distant for the students served by the CTP beginners and an important part of CTP’s broader vision for teaching, could be viewed as a generalized object of teaching. It does seem to speak to an idealized image of the good life in the 21st century—a world in which everyone reaches the pinnacle of institutionalized education and reaps the economic benefits. My decision to include college here rather than in the last section reflected the close relationship between the goals of increasing academic achievement and increasing college admission rates for underprivileged students. But the
problem may be in my fracturing of the object for heuristic purposes, and the question of how to categorize the goal of raising college admission rates may reveal the overlap between the pedagogical object and generalized object of teaching. In other words, the distinction between the two objects is not firm. Regardless, for the beginning teacher learning the nuts and bolts of practice, my analysis suggested that raising student achievement rather than getting all students to college was the more immediate and pressing concern addressed by CTP program leaders.

It is also worth noting that data-driven instruction and classroom management were only two of many instructional themes addressed by program leaders. The district’s teacher performance evaluation listed several criteria of effective teaching that the seminar instructors drew attention to through mini-lectures, in-class activities, and assignments. It could be said that the pedagogical object was actually to raise student achievement by showing minimum levels of proficiency on all criteria. Unlike the other criteria, however, data-driven instruction and classroom management came across as more foundational and persisted as themes across the weekly seminar. As noted above, working with data was a focus of seminar in the fall and spring. And many of the other criteria were tied into using data, such as differentiating lessons based on trends in student performance. Also, the program had beginners consider classroom management first before the other criteria. For these reasons and in light of the evidence I presented in this section, it made sense to focus my analytic attention on data-driven instruction and classroom management as key components of the program’s pedagogical object.

In summary, CTP engaged its beginning teachers in many activities aimed at raising student achievement and thus closing the achievement gap. There was some indication that the program hoped to provide its partner district with more teachers capable of using data-driven instruction and classroom management techniques attuned to making the best use of instructional
time. The message conveyed to CTP beginners thus appeared to be that a heart invested in raising student achievement would desire to get better at using data and managing time and behavior.

Indications of beginners’ heartfelt investment in CTP’s pedagogical object

Compared to the object of teaching, a heartfelt investment in the program’s pedagogical object seemed less uniform among the CTP beginners. My analysis also revealed another pedagogical object—to have fun—evident in the beginners’ comments during seminar and in interviews that seemed to be in tension with the objects of maintaining rigorous classroom management and raising student achievement.

Investing (or not) in data-driven instruction, testing, and classroom management.

During weekly seminars some beginners showed signs that they both understood and were invested in raising student achievement through data-driven instruction. In a late spring workshop on improving data literacy, the CTP beginners posted brief takeaways on an online message board that included expressed preferences for certain data-collection techniques. As one beginner posted, “Clickers are WONDERFUL!!!!!!!” Several posted comments were on finding a viable system for data collection and analysis. As one beginner wrote:

I need to create a system that works for me. I collect a lot of data and use it to drive instruction, but don't manage it well, which indicates that my current system isn’t working well. I need to have a system that is easy to enter data in and is meaningful for me and my students. [CTP-seminar-050114]

The expressed excitement over certain data-collection techniques and interest in finding personally “meaningful” systems suggested that CTP beginners might have a heartfelt investment in data-driven instruction.
Further evidence of such an investment in data-driven instruction and raising student achievement was in some of the final presentations the CTP beginners delivered on the last day of the weekly seminar. In the presentations they needed to address their teaching challenges, successes, and goals. They were also required to provide numeric evidence of growth in student learning, which most beginners chose to show through data tables and graphs of students’ scores. While sharing these table and graphs there was some indication of a heartfelt investment in data-driven instruction. For example, during her presentation Dawn presented data on students’ literacy growth and said she was “ecstatic” about one student’s progress even though the girl didn’t meet the target assessment score. It seemed that Dawn’s relationship with the child might also be shaping her investment in using achievement data.

Another beginner noted that his school was still trying to implement a “data cycle” and to use achievement data to develop “action plans” for individual students. Despite the slow progress in his school, he told his peers that he had used data in his kindergarten class and remarked,

I like looking at data. It’s very comforting to me to be able to use a spreadsheet and … see, “Okay, yah, that does reflect what I’m seeing or hmmm, that doesn’t reflect what I feel.” [CTP-seminar-051514]

Most of the beginners just presented data in a way that indicated that they understood its purpose and, if they offered any indication of a heartfelt investment, it was similar to Dawn’s expression of pleasure over gains achieved. This beginner’s comment stood out because not only was he okay with using data, but he also mentioned finding it “comforting” and that he “liked” to look at the spreadsheet. It was thus easier to claim that his heart was invested in data practices and the program’s pedagogical object.
My analysis of other final presentations, however, suggested that some beginners were perhaps less invested and had mixed feelings on data-driven instruction. Mid-way through his talk, for example, James shared a graph of data from tests he administered showing students’ academic growth. He explained how he and his mentor allowed one boy to get up and move around while taking it. Pointing at the graph he said,

We got his test back and it was major growth. It was amazing to see that if we just let [the student] be himself … and do his thing he could accomplish way more than we ever expected. [CTP-seminar-051514]

This result, he added, confirmed that unconventional test-taking approaches might benefit some students. After his presentation a peer asked how he thought a student like that would perform given that “testing is so conformity-based.” James responded, “Testing can be a reflection of his ability in the right environment.” He then paused, as if hesitating to speak, and stated,

I don’t want to give away too much of myself, but I’m just going to go for it. I think we assess way too much—way too much. And this is coming from somebody who likes assessing and likes collecting data. [CTP-seminar-051514]

He then added that he felt that the increase in testing was going to “screw students” in special education. Thus, while he liked data practices, James had some concerns over their uses that he seemed to think were counter to the program’s (and district’s) prevailing sentiment and should be kept hidden. Indeed, it seemed that his heart was torn over the program’s pedagogical object. In one sense his heart was invested in data-driven instruction, but not necessarily in the ways he had observed during his residency year.

Of all the CTP beginners who presented that day, only one conveyed a sense that her heart was not invested in the program’s pedagogical object. As she told the group,
Something that I’ve grappled with this year is definitely feeling this pressure and this tunnel vision on test scores—that that’s what matters. And I’m very much into empathy ... and my whole philosophy is about that relationship-building piece, so it’s hard to not see that modeled or validated and be told that all that matters is your test scores. [CTP-seminar-051514]

This beginner went on to say that, going forward, she wanted “to be more conscious of building that relationship piece” into her teaching. It concerned her that CTP and the district prioritized one metric of success—the test score—and not the “whole child.” She told the group that her “main takeaway” from the year was to be true to who you are and authentic, and not doubting yourself. There are a lot of different ways to do things and it doesn't mean that one’s better than the other. Knowing that everyone has that “students-first” mindset... [CTP-seminar-051514]

She came across as resolved to keep her heart invested in the things that mattered most to her and not what the program and district focused on. Perhaps looking for common ground, she evoked the program’s generalized object of teaching, being “students-first.” She thus showed how it could be possible for a beginning teacher to recognize and share, as Ryan called it, a “common core” purpose for teaching despite disagreements over the pedagogical object.

Additional evidence of uncertainty and some resistance to the program’s pedagogical object emerged as a small group of beginners chatted in between activities during the weekly seminar. The conversation got started as Alexandra (non-focal beginner) brought up data team meetings and said that her team met every other week. Kelsey noted that at her school they met twice a week to discuss data. Commenting on Kelsey’s situation James exclaimed, “You’re all up in data” [CTP-seminar-021314]! This prompted Kelsey to say, “I feel like we’re so hung up
on data sometimes that we don’t teach.” She went on to mention the focus on testing and listed off a string of tests they had to administer, then threw her hands into the air in a gesture of defeat and exclaimed, “Stop! Oh my god!” After a moment, she noted that testing was “helpful to some extent” but she found it to be exhausting for the students, whom she imitated by slouching in her chair and throwing her head back in a sign of exasperation.

The group’s conversation then pivoted to time and behavior management. Alexandra noted how Kelsey’s mentor teacher had “rituals and routines up the whazoo, like so strong” [CTP-seminar-021314]. By comparison, Alexandra noted how her classroom environment was more “relaxed,” with students having enough down time to read books of interest. She snapped her fingers quickly to punctuate how the students in Kelsey’s class moved so fast through activities and she admitted, “I would get overwhelmed by that.” Kelsey responded by claiming that other schools had far more behavior problems than her school due to excessive free time. As she saw it, “when you give them a centimeter,” things unravel and you lose “so much structured time.” Alexandra replied that transition time was important, though, because “[the students] need a break.” Kelsey conceded the point (“I do agree with that.”) and admitted that her school was very structured. Alexandra then said that she “would not want to work there.” Through the back and forth exchange Alexandra and Kelsey both seemed to have less of a heartfelt investment in testing, though Kelsey seemed more invested in the rigid form of classroom management in her residency classroom and school.

There seemed to be an allure to the pedagogical ideal of well-managed students. CTP beginners often identified management as their most challenging instructional issue. For example, in interviews when I asked what a “bad day” looked like, Ben explained that his worst were those that got him thinking,
Man, all I did today was just correct behavior. I was telling people to sit, or they need to be working at their desk, or they need to be silent. That’s all I did today. And I think it’s frustrating… [Ben-int1-27:59]

Addressing the same question, Dawn said,

A bad day in a classroom is when you’re spending ninety percent of your time on behavior management … [when] all the tools that CTP has taught you, all the tools that your mentor has showed you … aren’t working, and at the end of the day you’re like, “I didn’t teach a single thing.” [Dawn-int1-20:58]

Classroom management was thus a pressing issue for the beginners. In fact, the beginners who struggled to perform, like Mark and Ryan, mentioned that it was management of student time and behavior that jeopardized their instructional progress.

The allure of a well-behaved and smooth running classroom was more palpable among beginners who found their residency classrooms instructionally disorganized or erratic. For example, while sharing their thoughts in seminar on a forthcoming solo teaching event, a beginner informed the cohort, “I’m looking forward to implementing more structure” [CTP-seminar-102413]. Another said, “I’m looking forward to consistency.” In an interview, Sarah revealed how fulfilling it could be to achieving a degree of structure and consistency. Referring to small behavioral management victories, she said, “Every time [the students] walk down the hall quietly I’m like, ‘Yes, I’m rewarded.’ You know” [Sarah-int1-31:37]? She compared this exhilaration to learning to surf. “It’s really painful and really exhausting and you’re really horrible,” she explained, “but every time you catch a wave you’re convinced you’ll catch another one” [Sarah-int1-31:22]. Sarah thus seemed invested in getting better at managing students. And
with the surfing metaphor she articulated the allure of making instructional progress as each success fueled a desire for more success.

**Wanting to have “fun” and promote “fun” in teaching.** In my analysis, the CTP beginners often described the pleasure of teaching in one of two ways: 1) as having fun while teaching or 2) as seeing students having fun. Often these two were related. Though less specific than raising student achievement, a task that a teacher could perhaps find fun, the broader ideal of “fun” seemed in itself a pedagogical object, something that a teacher could desire and work toward fulfilling through her teaching. This possibility was evident in listening to Sarah, who during our second interview remarked,

I’m not just teaching ‘cause hanging out with 38 or 35 nine-year-olds is the most fun thing you can do with your day. Although I am beginning to learn it is really fun. [Sarah-int2-18:22]

Earlier in the interview she had said, “It’s cool to be excited with the kids and it’s cool to get to have fun with them without any looming thing” [Sarah-int2-05:35].” This was the case with a big Friday afternoon pajama party she threw with her class, which she described as, “the most I’ve ever seen every kid having fun” [Sarah-int2-06:31].

A companion pleasure to seeing students have fun was having fun yourself while teaching. Recalling her best day of teaching, Dawn said,

I was like, “Oh my gosh, I had so much fun with the kids.” Like, we laughed, we did challenging work, they were persistent in it, and that’s something that you help them learn to do, obviously, is persevere and be persistent in that. So yesterday, I came out and was like, “That was so fun!” [Dawn-int1-22:04]
Fun could thus be party days or it could include days where your instruction worked and the students lived up to your expectations as diligent scholars. Elizabeth had had similar experiences and said during our first interview, “I would say that a good day is feeling like all these ideas and plans that I have … went well, kids were really engaged, asking lots of questions, answering each other's questions, having fun” [Elizabeth-int1-21:54].

Promoting “fun” learning experiences was actually one of the instructional goals in CTP’s partner district. During final presentations several beginners laughed when mentioning this as if to suggest that fun remained elusive [CTP-seminar-051514]. Expressing a hope that teaching would prove to be more fun, one beginner told the group,

That’s one of the biggest things that I have learned throughout the year, is that if you’re not having fun, life kind of sucks. I don’t think that’s why we got into teaching was to deliver a perfect lesson plan … I lot of us got into teaching to have fun, and we can all do that in our own way. [CTP-seminar-051514]

The beginner thus prioritized the pedagogical object of fun and appeared to suggest that the object of delivering sound instruction, while desirable, might lose its appeal if teaching couldn’t make good on a desire for fun.

Speaking to this possibility in an interview, Sarah observed that having fun could prove challenging as standardized testing demanded much of their instructional attention. Describing the experience of this tension she explained:

[The student’s and I will] get into something and it will be exciting or it will be fun and then I’ll be like, “Well there went the lesson and I’m not sure what we learned.” But we all had fun together, but I have to remember that … it’s easy to get into having fun and working with your kids and they’re excited and you’re excited, but I have to work on my
laser focus. I only have this many days before these kids get the chance to prove
themselves on their [state tests]. [Sarah-int1-35:10]

Despite her willingness to stay focused on test preparation, Sarah mentioned her disappointment
at having to cut short a state history unit that the students were really excited about. But the
pedagogical object of raising student achievement trumped the object of having fun. Not quite
resisting the program’s pedagogical object, Sarah and the other beginners appeared to be charting
a course forward as teachers in which teaching could be fun without compromising a heartfelt
investment in raising student achievement. Their hearts thus seemed invested in both objects.

In this section I have provided evidence from interviews and the weekly seminar
indicating that, as a cohort, the hearts of CTP beginners were not equally invested in the
program’s pedagogical object. Though no beginner openly opposed the aim of raising student
achievement, Dawn and three of her CTP peers seemed more enthusiastic about the instructional
practices the program emphasized for getting there. James and three other CTP beginners seemed
less enthusiastic and expressed some hesitation over demands that they orient themselves toward
data, testing, and more rigid forms of classroom management. In a discussion with one of those
beginners during seminar, Kelsey shared those concerns, especially over testing, but also noted
the perceived necessity of rigid management. Ben, Dawn, Mark, and Ryan likewise mentioned
during interviews how poor student behavior could be destabilizing and required a firm and
consistent stance on discipline. Finally, my analysis also suggested that fun—having fun as a
teacher and promoting fun classroom experiences for students—was something that Sarah,
Dawn, Elizabeth, and at least one other CTP beginner may have desired of their teaching going
forward.
Ontological object(s) at CTP

An orienting narrative to be who you are but also growth-oriented and positive

From a focus on the object of teaching and the pedagogical object, I now spotlight the ontological object as it emerged through my analysis of CTP. During the weekly seminar program leaders invited the CTP beginners to consider and share how they viewed themselves as teachers. Yet at the same time, program leaders sent signals of how the beginners were expected to be as developing teachers. This tension was manifested in two products that the beginners were asked to create in preparation to interview for teaching positions in the district: a “philosophy of education” statement and a cover letter. The difference seemed hazy for the beginners. Responding to a beginner’s request for clarity, Jason responded that the philosophy statement was about

what makes you *you* and brought you to this point … how did those experiences kind of shape you and who you are and bring you to [CTP] and this philosophical thought of why you want to be an educator. [CTP-seminar-011614]

By comparison, he explained that the cover letter was “the makeup of you and what you bring to the table” as a teacher. Still sensing some confusion, he reiterated that the philosophy statement answered questions including, “Why do you teach? Why do you do this? What drives you everyday? What are you passionate about? What you’re going to do and continue to do and how are you going to continue to grow as a learner.” He then added, “So your philosophy is kind of like what’s built inside of you that makes you want to do this work ... the deep root of why you want to do this.” The conversation moved on to statement length, and it was not clear if the beginners ended up understanding the difference.
It appeared to me that Jason was drawing a distinction between personal and professional, with the philosophy statement a more intimate portrait of one’s path, purpose, and being and the cover letter a clearer articulation of how one inhabited the role of teacher. What “makes you you” would be in the letter but outfitted in a way to highlight what you brought to the professional table. The line between personal and professional and how one negotiated it seemed to be a key dimension of the ontological object at CTP. Program leaders often reminded the beginners that who they were—the kind of person they seemed to be—was who the program and partner district wanted. For example, working to assuage beginners’ anxiety over interviewing for teaching positions Jason stated, “You are the priority candidates, so don’t put too much pressure on yourself so you kind of dig your own hole … Just be yourself and you guys will be great” [CTP-seminar-010914]. A week later in seminar he similarly advised, “Don’t pressure yourself until you can’t show yourself” [CTP-seminar-011614].

The message to “be yourself” was perhaps confounded for the beginners by the intensive focus on honing one’s professional pitch to sound as if one comfortably inhabited CTP’s ideal and had internalized its concepts, practices, and aims. Describing this challenge, Sarah said that she found it “hard to separate the Kool-Aid and themselves” when program leaders kept encouraging them to use “buzzwords” and tell the interviewers “what they want[ed] to hear” [CTP-seminar-021314]. In her view, “People can sense genuine and tell when it’s rehearsed.” She had therefore decided to “be genuine” on the grounds that, if “the interviewers don’t like something you say but it came from you, then that’s not the right school for you.” Affirming this decision, a visiting district administrator noted that this is why personal examples were important. In her view, “They are from your heart, which makes them genuine.” But Sarah’s
concern seemed to be that her heartfelt examples, though genuine, might miss the mark if not communicated with the preferred “buzzwords.”

My analysis did indicate that program leaders had in mind some expectations for how teachers should be and present themselves as professionals. Two in particular emerged often during the weekly seminar. The first was to be growth-oriented—someone with a “learner mindset.” Stating the aim more generally, a visiting professor remarked, “I hope that all of you are the teachers who are invested at getting better at your job” [CTP-seminar-012314]. More specifically, the beginners were frequently told by program leaders to have a learner mindset that remained open to critical feedback and took initiative to get better. Dawn mentioned that this was the biggest expectation of program leaders, a message “driven into” them that they be “constantly working to get better at our craft” [Dawn-int1-38:37]. Conveying this message midway through the program, for example, Kyle asked the beginners to compose a written reflection describing the type of lens—microscope, mirror, camera, or telescope—they were going to use to examine their teaching “for continued growth” [CTP-seminar-120513]. He reminded them that they had more work to do and commented:

We have seen outrageous growth from all of you and we’re really excited about that, but we need to see that continued growth. We need you guys to take the stance of a life-long learner. [CTP-seminar-120513]

Adding to this, Lauren reminded them to be open to receiving feedback from mentors and instructors. “How do you take it?” she posed to the group, adding, “How can you make sure that you receive it in the way in which you can still grow?” As winter gave way to spring, Mary (program director) offered a similar reminder by telling the cohort,
I just wanted to caution you guys if you start to get comfortable—you’re embedded in [the district] culture now, you’ve been here, you know, you’re feeling great—and I want you to feel that way, but I also want you to remember that we’re all life-long learners which means we’re still learning. [CTP-seminar-022714]

Notably, the program leaders appeared to be addressing an attitude that the beginners needed to adopt, and the language of “mindsets” and “stances” indicated that program leaders were getting at more than just showing the ability to implement feedback. They were having the beginners consider how they as professionals would take feedback on an emotional level. What they appeared to be communicating was that a heartfelt investment in getting better entailed an investment in being the kind of person who could thrive in a critical environment, who had the mindset to take feedback and not get negative or make too much of it emotionally.

Further evidence of the growth-oriented dimension of CTP’s ontological object was evident at the principal panel as elementary school principals told the beginners what they looked for in beginning teachers. Rather than addressing a capacity to receive external criticism, however, the principals emphasized a capacity for self-awareness and critique. As one principal advised,

I think it’s really important to highlight that you’re very self-reflective and have a good sense of what your strengths are and what you are continuing to work on and can really identify those [CTP-seminar-022014].

In a job interview she said that she might ask them where they ranked themselves on a scale of one to ten on their “ability to be a reflective practitioner.” She also wanted them to be self-motivating and remarked:
So I want to hear your sense of understanding that you don’t require somebody to always come in and tell you what to do better or what you need to be working on, that you have a learner mindset that you’re always working towards getting better, and … have a sense of self-awareness of where you’re working—your growth. [CTP-seminar-022014]

This point was echoed by another principal who tried to assess, “Can teachers take the initiative in their learning?” For her this meant being proactive and not waiting for professional development. “If they want to know something”, she explained, “they go after it and go find the answers for themselves.”

The principals on the panel arguably saw themselves as embodying this reflective stance and wanted like-minded colleagues in their buildings. One principal, for example, told a story of a prospective hire who said she had nothing to work on as a teacher. As she explained,

At that point I knew that it was going to be hard for us to work together because I’m constantly growing and I’m constantly learning and I’m constantly asking for feedback and sharing how I make mistakes and working to collaborate to solve problems [CTP-seminar-022014].

This principal thus combines aspect of both dimensions of being growth-oriented: being receptive to feedback while also being sufficiently self-aware to see one’s self as “constantly growing.” Indeed, it seemed to me that the combined message of the CTP instructors and the principals was that a heartfelt investment in being growth-oriented would show in how one took criticism and took the initiative to get better.

As a companion to being growth-oriented was an expectation that beginners be positive. In seminar, instructors often emphasized positivity in subtle ways by having the beginners follow up negative stories with positive ones that showed the bright side of things. This was most
evident during periodic “temperature checks” in seminar as the instructors first invited beginners to share what was bothering them or causing them stress and then had them share what they looked forward to or were excited about.

This capacity for positivity was reinforced through “habits-of-mind” presented during weekly seminar. For example, the instructors presented the following quote by Helen Keller: “When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has been opened for us” [CTP-seminar-030614]. Another quote discussed was the following quote by Abraham Lincoln: “We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses.” In response, one beginner commented how the thorns improved the plant and, as such, “you can look at the thorns as positive rather than negative” [CTP-seminar-120513]. Another beginner observed how in life “you run into a bunch of thorns, but the cool thing is, if you think about it from the ‘anti’ perspective, the roses are really awesome.” Later that day Mary referred to the quote to frame the beginners’ experiences in a positive light while inviting them to self-reflect. Enthusiastically she asked,

What are you thinking? You just made it through six months! Like, it was torture to get through the application process … You’ve passed that! You’ve made it this far… You are the roses on that thorn bush. How are you feeling? What are you thinking about? [CTP-seminar-120513]

Likewise a visiting administrator started her session on effective job interviewing by stating, “So, as promised … we now go and get a job. Isn’t that so exciting” [CTP-seminar-012314]? In both examples the program leaders appeared to be inviting the beginners to feel a sense of pride over their accomplishments in the face of the difficult circumstances they had faced during their preparation.
Compared to being growth-oriented, the ontological expectation of being positive was less explicitly defined or articulated by CTP program leaders. It was more evident in what came across as a normative expectation that stood out in my analysis as I sought to make sense of the emotional terrain of what was apparently a stressful year for the beginners. Being a positive person—a “rose on that thorn bush”—seemed to be an ontological ideal considered worth striving for at CTP.

Along with the ontological object I have outlined, there was some indication that program leaders offered another orienting narrative that directed the CTP beginners toward becoming leaders. The syllabus for the weekly seminar asked the beginners to consider the question, “How do I … prepare myself to become an instructional leader [CTP-seminar-syllabus]?” In an interview Dawn mentioned that it was “an expectation [at CTP]… that you do become a leader” [Dawn-int3-14:34]. She wasn’t sure if this was an explicit part of the program’s design, but she got the impression that CTP chose individuals who were “naturally inclined to be a leader and … always wondering, ‘What more can I do? What’s the greater steps’” [Dawn-int3-14:34]? How this impression was conveyed to Dawn was not entirely clear in my data, though there were some contextual clues to support her impressions. For example, during my first visit to seminar (for which I have no audio/video recording), I noted how Mary countered a beginner’s concern over top down reforms by saying that they were being “trained to be leaders” who would not feel like things were being done to them [CTP-seminar-101013]. Also, as mentioned earlier, the beginners were assigned Steven Farr’s (2010) text, *Teaching as Leadership*, which frames teaching as an act of leading. In seminar, there were also many role models of people in leadership or in higher-status positions in education. Lauren, for example, had been an assistant principal, and visiting instructors were usually principals, district administrators, specialists,
professors, or instructional coaches. Many of these individuals mentioned having taught in the past, though they were no longer teachers. Finally, the program provided a first rung up the ladder to leadership by encouraging its graduates to serve as mentors for beginners.

There are thus some signs that being a leader was an ontological object at CTP, but without clearer or more abundant evidence I am hesitant to claim with confidence that program leaders were intentionally trying to prepare beginners for leadership positions beyond teaching. It seems more likely that they were cultivating dispositions and a sense of purpose that made the ontological object of leading appealing to beginners, though this is a claim deserving of analytic rigor beyond the scope of this study.

As with the other objects I have discussed, my analysis revealed multiple objects even though the CTP program leaders conveyed one ontological object more than the other. Mostly the leaders engaged the beginners in thinking about who they were personally and professionally and appeared to convey a message that the “self” they brought to teaching was what the program and district were looking for. The ontological object they thus framed permitted a “genuine” or “authentic” self, though program leaders expressed preferences for a self capable of being growth-oriented and staying positive.

*Indications of beginners’ heartfelt investment in CTP’s ontological object*

My analysis suggested that the CTP beginners had a heartfelt investment in being growth-oriented and desired to get better. They also appeared to be navigating the tension between personally meaningful ways of being and being what the program demanded of them, often looking to peers and mentors as models of the ontological object.

**Being growth-oriented and positive.** During interviews, several CTP beginners indicated not only their receptivity to feedback but also signs of a heartfelt investment in getting
better. When asked about her experience in the program, Sarah said, “I think it’s great. I love it. I love getting critiqued. So for me, it’s ideal. It’s competitive. It’s fast-paced. It’s constant feedback” [Sarah-int1-18:14]. She noted that it reminded her a lot of her time as a college athlete with the constant coaching and pressure to excel. Dawn likewise remarked, “I love receiving feedback … It’s really nice to get that feedback and it’s almost immediate” [Dawn-int1-13:09]. She did admit that it was “overwhelming” to receive a lot of feedback all at once as had happened during her two-week solo teaching event in the fall. But then, exhibiting a capacity to put a positive spin on the situation, she added, “But all that feedback has been really useful for me” [Dawn-int1-13:43]. Kelsey mentioned how getting feedback on the fall solo teaching event made her feel good about her efforts. As she stated,

> It was very uplifting for me to realize I'm doing and well people are seeing that. It… was really rewarding after two weeks where you've killed yourself to know that you did a good job. [Kelsey-int1-19:51]

A desire for feedback was strong enough among the beginners that it bothered them that program leaders didn’t always see how invested they were in getting better. Elizabeth, for example, told me on multiple occasions that she felt like she was receiving too many compliments on her teaching from her mentor teacher and she wanted more critiques. As she said, “I'm more like, ‘Give me more feedback. Tell me what I'm doing wrong’” [Elizabeth-int1-25:53]. Mark also wanted more direct and explicit feedback on his teaching. He explained,

> Being able to have that feedback for me is pretty key, because I could read a book on how to do it and kind of figure it out, but I know I would not be as effective for my learning style as watching someone doing it and then having them say, “Okay, this was
good, this was not as good, this is what I suggest. Let’s try it for the next time.” [Mark-int1-12:59]

Such a desire for feedback indicated by Mark and the other beginners indicated a heartfelt investment in being growth-oriented. But it tended to make the beginners dependent on program leaders for indications of their growth.

Some of the CTP beginners seemed eager for signs of their progress. This was evident when, in a midyear seminar, Lauren warned them against becoming too “comfortable in [their] own teaching skin” [CTP-seminar-120513]. Through their replies, a few beginners seemed worried that she knew something they didn’t about where they should be in their growth. As one beginner responded,

I guess I don’t feel like I’m anywhere near that … I still feel very uncomfortable in my teaching skin. And I still feel like, holy shit, there’s still a whole lot that I need to sort of conquer before I get there. So anyways, it’s just kind of interesting for me to hear Lauren’s perspective … and feel like, “Huh, is that where everyone else is at?” Because I don’t feel that… [CTP-seminar-120513]

Though no one admitted to being “comfortable in their teaching skin,” a couple beginners did appear to spin discomfort and lacking confidence a beneficial and even desirable ways of being. As one beginner commented,

I’m not super confident but it’s easy to fall in the trap where you’re like “I did this for two weeks, um, good.” … It’s nice feeling comfortable [and] I think we can get relaxed and I don’t want to get relaxed so … I still feel like there’s so much left for you to do.

Because I think if I don’t feel like that then I’m not gonna be the teacher that I want to be,
I’m just gonna … [be] average, just show up, not really helping the kids much... [CTP-seminar-120513]

In a similar comment, Elizabeth explained,

I think that that's a really good mindset to have because … I was feeling really confident because I had a really good handle on my behavior management, and then felt way too competent and then really crashed and burned … So I think it's a really good attitude to have to never feel like too confident, ‘cause that's when you stop learning. [CTP-seminar-120513]

Sarah, however, took issue with how Lauren and the group seemed to be framing comfort with respect to confidence and explained to her peers,

I’m very comfortable … in my environment and in my setting. But am I a good teacher? No. I've got a lot of growth. But I saw it as … being really comfortable and that's going to make me able to grow a lot more ‘cause I’m not nervous to ask for help or resources or be like, “Wow! That went so bad! But I’m not going to get kicked out. It’s okay… The kids aren't broken.” [CTP-seminar-120513]

Rather than assuming that comfort signaled a problem, she pointed out that comfort in one’s school and with one’s standing in the program was arguably important for taking initiative to “ask for help or resources.” Sarah thus seemed to indicate that without some degree of comfort the CTP beginners might not be able to go beyond waiting for feedback and really become growth-oriented in the full sense conveyed by program leaders. But the year moved quickly and it seemed more likely that comfort came to those beginners who made efforts to take greater initiative in their growth and not wait for mentors and other program leaders to tell them what to do.

Chapter 4
Ben’s difficulties with feedback support this claim. In our second interview he said he had not gotten good feedback despite demands from program leaders that he improve. Expressing his frustration during an interview he said, “[Teaching is] just a grind of ‘Am I doing this right? Am I doing this right?’ People still don't tell me—they send me these little feedback things that say, ‘Good job’” [Ben-int2-05:23]. Ben seemed worried that program leaders mistook his way of taking and using their feedback as an indication that he lacked a heartfelt investment in becoming a teacher. As he explained, “I think the perception [of me is] I don’t care and I don’t try hard because I’m not stressing out about every little detail” [Ben-int2-26:43]. He was defensive about his more nonchalant way of being a teacher and didn’t think he should have to change. As he said to me, “I am who I am” [Ben-int2-14:36].

As the year progressed Ben felt increasingly misunderstood and had a hard time being positive. By January his lack of improvement led to a threat of possible expulsion from the program. Describing the situation to me in our second interview he exclaimed,

I don’t usually repress emotions! I let ‘em out! So now, having to put on my smiling face and be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed in the morning—I think I flip the switch pretty well. I’ll be in my car and be like, “Arrrrrgh!” Slammin’ the door! Then I come in and it’s like, [in a soft, sweet, and sarcastic voice] “So glad to see everybody. Can’t wait.” [Ben-int2-22:41]

He noted that it was “frustrating not to be yourself” as a teacher [Ben-int2-24:11]. Ben admitted to me that he was “not a great teacher” and only a “good teacher.” He said that he wanted to be great but conceded, “I guess I have my own idea of what great is ... and maybe that’s clouding what’s happening at the current moment.” Summarizing his dilemma in our third interview he lamented,
I haven’t been able to be myself. I haven’t been able to be the person I am, and to be able to express that and have fun and laugh about things… I can’t be all happy in what I’m trying to do here. [Ben-int3-31:27]

Ben thus seemed to have a heartfelt investment in being himself, but it was a self that did not appear to fit with CTP’s ontological object. Though he may have desired to be a teacher, he did not seem to have a heartfelt investment in fulfilling the program’s ideal of how a teacher took and made use of feedback. As tensions mounted through the winter he seemed to think he wasn’t getting good feedback, but in talking to his mentor teacher I got the impression that he wasn’t moving fast enough on the feedback he’d been provided or taking initiative to seek assistance with doing so. As tensions subsided in the spring, Ben did confirm that this was likely the case as, in hindsight, he could see that program leaders had been communicating to him the message, “You need to take the advice or you’re outta here” [Ben-int3-28:47]. Ben’s dilemma thus helped underscore the ontological challenge of trying to be your own version of a developing teacher in a high-stakes preparation environment like CTP where progress had to happen quickly.

In fact, the expediency of the program seemed to give the beginners the impression that CTP’s ideal teacher exhibited a “Type A” way of being. According to Ben the program was “Type A heaven” because everything was always “go, go, go, and do this and ahhh, ahhh [Ben-int2-26:43]!” Elizabeth suggested that the program selected a “type of person” who was Type A in the sense that they were “very motivated go-getters” [Elizabeth-int2-06:54]. Mark likewise observed that CTP beginners were Type A because they were “a little more self-propelled” [Mark-int3-37:14]. Dawn suggested that everyone at CTP had some Type A qualities but felt that nobody really fit the type. The only one who really embraced the label was James. As he said to me, “I love people who are Type A; they’re my role models. I look up to them” [James-int3-
He considered himself to be competitive and envisioned himself on a quest for recognition and the power to make a difference. The characterization of a Type A ideal by the interviewed beginners arguably reflected aspects of the program’s ontological object, notably the initiative dimension of being growth-oriented. Their identification of this ideal also indicated a shared awareness of how the program expected them to be, and it suggested that they were developing a sense of the program’s ontological object and its desirability by comparing themselves to their program peers.

**Mentors as models of desired ways of being a teacher.** Mentors also seemed to offer ways for CTP beginners to see the ontological object in action and imagine themselves as teachers. James, for example, described his mentor as “very direct, Type A, competitive like me” [James-int1-38:01]. He said that he was fortunate to be “paired up with a master teacher who’s really awesome” and considered it important for beginners to “select someone who kind of fits your personality” in the way that he had [James-int1-33:05]. Kelsey said that she related to her mentor in many ways, explaining how they were “very similar in the fact that we both plan to the T, neither one of us flying by the seat of our pants” [Kelsey-int3-33:25]. She considered her mentor to be “an exemplar of what CTP [was] trying to breed” because she did “embody all the things that they’re trying to teach … as far as rituals and routines” [Kelsey-int2-39:32]. In fact, it pleased her that her mentor was self-reflective and tended to frame feedback in terms of her own instructional shortcomings and goals. This was evident during a debrief meeting I attended in which Kelsey’s mentor took responsibility for one of her protégé’s instructional weaknesses, noting that she had not modeled it very well. Kelsey valued her mentor’s contributions, noting how beneficial the relationship was to her success in CTP. As she explained, “I feel like I’ve
received very positive feedback and I feel like I’m doing extremely well in this program and I credit that to [my mentor]” [Kelsey-int2-40:03].

Mark struggled with his first mentor teacher but switched mentors midyear. He described immediately hitting it off with his new mentor in ways he hadn’t with his original mentor. In an email he sent me confirming the switch he wrote, “I feel really good about her, in that I want to have a room like hers when the fall rolls around” [Mark-email communication-022214]. During a small group discussion in seminar he explained how she was a good role model for his major teaching challenge, which was maintaining order and focus during instruction. He said she was “very intentional” when giving instructions and exclaimed, “It’s just this beautiful thing [and] as I was watching I was like, ‘Damn! [points firmly] That is what I want to be’” [CTP-seminar-030614]!

Instead of her mentor, Dawn mentioned being drawn to the principal who hired her. She described the strong connection they felt when they met by stating, “I think we both knew that there was an instant, ‘Oh, I want to work with you! And I want to work with you’” [Dawn-int3-01:58]! Dawn said she appreciated the principal’s emphasis on structure and her preference for a no-nonsense approach to behavior management. Rather than having Dawn go through a typical interview, the principal spent time in her classroom watching her teach and interacting with students. “She was fantastic,” Dawn recalled. “She talked to the kids [and] really just enjoy[ed] her time in here...” As they debriefed the visit Dawn said that she was impressed. As she remarked, “I really looked at her and said, ‘I think you could be a great mentor for me’” [Dawn-int3-07:24].

While talking about their mentors most CTP beginners exhibited an enthusiasm for how the mentors carried themselves in the classroom and interacted with students. The mentors thus
appeared to offer a desirable image for how to be a teacher. In fact, as Ryan’s experiences revealed, it could be hard to see one’s self in the profession without a desirable teacher image. In an interview shortly after his dismissal from the program, Ryan explained,

I feel that [program leaders] want to mold a person. I feel like they have an idea of what a teacher is and that you should fit those criteria—like, you should fit that mold of what that teacher is. [Ryan-int-07:59]

He went on to explain how he never really meshed with his mentor teacher, who was considered a top performer in the district and in his estimation fit CTP’s teacher “mold.” He saw the two of them as different kinds of people in temperament and drive. He described her as

more of a leader. She’s more of a perfectionist. Like, “Look at me and this is what excellent teaching is—I got it, this is what it is.” And it’s not that she didn’t work for it, and it’s not that she doesn’t look to gain new information all of the time … but she very much wants to be the top… She’s the best! Look at me, “I’m the best!” [Ryan-int-32:47]

He viewed himself as the opposite, telling me that he preferred to collaborate rather than compete. As he said of himself, “I’m much more of a learner; I’m more relaxed—more laid back.” Ryan considered his approach to learning to be more measured and thorough, something akin to scholarly learning. As noted with Ben, this stood in contrast to the intense drive and initiative expected of teachers at CTP. Rather than being critical of these preferences, however, Ryan acknowledged his shortcomings. Given his relative lack of success at CTP and impression that who he was as a person did “not translate to this profession,” it seemed that his heart was no longer invested in becoming a teacher.

To summarize, in the focal interviews four CTP beginners—Sarah, Dawn, Kelsey, and Mark—indicated a heartfelt commitment to being growth oriented, especially with receiving
critical feedback. Such commitment was also evident in the responses of Elizabeth and a CTP peer to Lauren’s suggestion in seminar that the cohort needed to avoid getting cocky. However, not all CTP beginners appeared as positive about this narrative, with one individual expressing concern that she was way behind her peers in terms of instructional growth. The discussion following Lauren’s comment also suggested to me that the CTP beginners were somewhat dependent on the feedback of their evaluators even though a capacity for taking the initiative to improve may have been necessary to keep pace with the program. Indeed, as Ben and Ryan’s cases illustrated, it may have been hard for the CTP beginners to stay positive if they felt incapable of being themselves as teachers. Finally, in interviews four of the eight focal beginners—James, Kelsey, Dawn, and Mark—expressed comments suggesting that mentors who offered a personally compelling image could incite a heartfelt investment in becoming a teacher. As Ryan revealed, it was also possible to maintain such an investment even when a mentor offered an image considered less attractive by a beginner.

Chapter summary

Through my analysis I have teased out several orienting narratives evident during the CTP’s weekly seminar. I suggested that a generalized object of teaching conveyed by program leaders was to serve students in underserved communities, which they distinguished from wanting to save students. Program leaders also established a pedagogical object, which was to raise student achievement through a commitment to data-driven instruction and efficient classroom management. They also established an ontological object, which was to be yourself while being growth-oriented and positive. For each object, I also provided evidence of alternatives suggesting other things that could be desired and perhaps other orienting narratives...
that could emerge for the CTP beginners. The desirability of being a leader, for example, could extend a beginner’s personal narrative beyond the classroom.

Generally, my analysis indicated that the hearts of CTP beginners were more uniformly invested in the program’s identified object of teaching than in its pedagogical and ontological objects. In interviews, all eight focal beginners echoed the refrain of the CTP instructors about making a difference in the lives of underserved students through teaching. A heartfelt investment in the program’s pedagogical object, however, seemed less certain and more mixed, with three beginners indicating hesitation over facets of that object, especially standardized testing and rigid classroom management. Finally, CTP beginners showed some heartfelt investment in the program’s ontological object, with four of the eight interviewed beginners expressing a desire for critical feedback. Also, the same number of interviewed beginners indicated that they looked to their mentors for desirable images of a teacher.

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1 Whether or not the other three instructors engaged in such affective coaching in and out of seminar is not clear given limitations to how much I could observe of seminar. I was also unable to witness much of the extensive support instructors provided to beginners at their practicum sites. From what I could observe it did seem that matters of empathy, emotion, and self-development were Jason’s contribution to the seminar. Unlike Kyle and Lauren’s temperature checks, Jason’s checks usually involved more meta-commentary about the stresses of teaching and how to survive as a teacher. He also brought in to seminar the notion of “love languages” to frame how best to build trusting relationships with students. And he delivered a lecture in spring on building self-awareness, staying emotionally present, and cultivating empathy as a teacher.

2 The whole premise of preparing new teachers to save teaching is not necessarily new, though it does seem that programs such as Teach for America have helped popularize such a mission (cf., Goldstein, 2014) and made it a fixture of the narrative conveyed to beginning teachers regarding the significance of their work.

3 Though I never observed them using it in an official capacity, I occasionally saw copies of Doug Lemov’s (2007) *Teach Like a Champion* lying around the seminar classroom. For those unfamiliar with the book, Lemov describes nearly fifty instructional practices used by teachers with proven records of raising student achievement in urban classrooms.
Chapter 5: Montessori Teacher Training

Orienting Narratives & Signs of MONT Beginners’ Heartfelt Investment

Having examined City Teacher Prep, I now focus on the Montessori teacher training program (MONT) to continue primarily addressing my first two research questions regarding the objects rendered desirable through the program’s discernible orienting narratives and how invested the beginning teachers appear in those objects. And I also highlight some possible multiple and competing objects of desire.

Through my analysis of the activities and instructor comments at MONT, the orienting narratives that I teased out from the comments of program leaders conveyed a sense that the preferred teacher (ideal subject) desired to realize Montessori’s cosmic vision of a peaceful society through teaching toward a positive and holistic image of the child (generalized object of teaching). A teacher whose heart was invested in that object would work to inspire children to become self-directed, joyful learners (pedagogical object) and be engaged in a process of transformation into a person capable of focusing attention on children (ontological object) (Figure 5.1). As I did in the previous chapter for CTP, I take each of these objects in turn and show how instructors communicated their contours and offered some signs of what it might look like to invest one’s heart in them. I then explore how the comments of MONT beginners during the courses and interviews indicated that their hearts might have been invested in those objects.

Generalized object(s) of teaching at MONT

*An orienting narrative of Montessori’s “cosmic vision” of peace fulfilled by teaching toward a positive and holistic image of the child*
As presented by course instructors in the summer training session, the Montessori lessons and pedagogy were a way to realize a “cosmic vision” of a peaceful society originally articulated by the founder of the tradition, Maria Montessori [MONT-philo-070814]. Of that “vision,” Nancy (instructor) told the beginners during a Classroom Leadership session, “It’s unchanging…it’s our anchor. It’s what keeps us true to our ideals” [MONT-classlead-071714]. Indeed, at the start of the summer Paula, the instructor of Montessori Philosophy course, reminded them of the importance of keeping this “big picture” in mind as they learned the practice [MONT-philo-061714]. She observed how they could get so into the lessons, materials, and techniques they might lose the “anchor” or “lighthouse” grounding their practice. Qualifying the comment she remarked, “it’s about how we treat children. It’s about how we interact with children.” Paula
then added that they were “definitely whole-child oriented,” and the focus on the child was central to Montessori because a peaceful society required that each child grow into a “moral being … accountable for her actions.” Later in the summer Nancy reinforced this connection between peace and children by showing them a picture of Maria Montessori underscored by her suggestion that “peace starts with the child,” which means that teachers “must look to the child” [MONT-classlead-072214].

To guide children’s growth into moral beings the instructors emphasized how Montessori teachers strove to maintain a positive image of children. For example, during a Classroom Leadership session Nancy invited the beginners to engage with how they were raised to view children. She suggested that those of them raised to see children as “inherently naughty” needed to change their view. Framing the preferred view she stated, “As Montessorians we believe that children are inherently good and that they truly, truly wish to do as asked” [MONT-classlead-072114]. Nancy then explained how, with an assumption of children’s goodness, they as teachers would be in a better position to set classroom expectations for behavior in a way that encouraged children to contribute to the Montessori vision of peaceful co-existence. In this way she seemed to be forging for the beginners a connection between the desired object of teaching and how an aspect of their instruction could help to realize it.

The MONT instructors also showed the beginners how the desired generalized object of teaching could be pursued by inviting children to think cosmically. One way this was demonstrated was through the instructors’ use of stories such as the Great Lessons. Before delivering the Great Lesson of the Universe, Jeff (instructor) explained that it was not only informative, but also a way to provide a “cosmic education” by revealing to students their place and purpose in the grand scheme of things [MONT-universe-063014]. Another way they were
shown of promoting cosmic thinking was through a reflective activity involving student-selected objects, perhaps from nature or from home. Modeling the activity for the beginning teachers, Paula had each of them select an object and take a few minutes to ponder its appeal and its “cosmic purpose” [MONT-philo-071114]. She then suggested that the cosmic lens could be used for personal introspection. Along similar lines, Jeff explained that a cosmic education prompted one to ask, “How are you going to grace the world with your presence” [MONT-classlead-063014]? His question resurfaced at the end of the summer as a quote printed on the cover page of the residency journal the beginners were given.

Among the instructors, a heartfelt investment in the Montessori vision seemed to surface as they talked about the need to promulgate it. For example, while responding to a beginner’s concern that Montessori was often viewed as “elitist,” Paula acknowledged cost as a barrier to access and, though she did not think a Montessori education should be free, she admitted to the group, “I just wish we could spread it” [MONT-philo-071114]. Another beginner then observed that Montessori seemed elitist because its philosophy was poorly understood. This prompted Paula to lament how in texts used in college education courses the richness of Montessori was often distilled into a paragraph or two. In another example, Lynn (Math instructor) expressed to the cohort her concern over how defensive people could get if they sensed that Montessori teachers were being placed on a pedestal. She then cautioned the group, “We don’t want to alienate people. We want to bring them into what we love” [MONT-math-061714]. Their comments taken in tandem, it seemed to me that the two instructors were defining a tension that teachers could feel in loving Montessori so much that they wished to spread it, though restraint was probably warranted to allow outsiders to really invest their hearts in what Montessori had to offer.
During Classroom Leadership sessions Nancy discussed how best to present Montessori’s guiding vision to parents without coming across as overzealous. She admitted that it was difficult to ask parents to let go of what they knew of school and learning and adopt a Montessori view. She told the beginners how in her experience parents often wanted to focus only on content learning, and as bearers of the tradition they would need to help the parents see,

We don’t teach math, we teach children. We teach the whole child. Those subjects are just tools in our toolbox. [MONT-classlead-072414]

In a session later in the summer she again reminded the beginners that the child was at the core of the teaching endeavor and noted, “Part of our job is to help parents understand their child better” [MONT-classlead-073114]. In her experience, it was better to share with parents how the cosmic vision informed their teaching at an appropriate time, like during a back-to-school night program. She also recommended looking for “teachable moments” where they could highlight how the method was serving the vision.

Thus, the instructors seemed to be suggesting that along with “bringing them into what we love,” the beginners would need to be prepared to face outside challenges to that love. This theme was explicitly raised during a Montessori Philosophy session when Paula warned the MONT beginners against allowing “fads” in education, especially the use of digital technology, to “dilute Montessori” [MONT-philo-071114]. In her view this tarnished the “beauty” of the tradition, which had managed to resist change while still “evolv[ing] to meet the needs of children.” Paula thus seemed to suggest that it could be difficult to stay oriented to the Montessori vision—its object of teaching—in light of changing times, but maintaining that orientation ensured that Montessori would remain pure enough to be recognizable to retain its appeal.

Chapter 5
To summarize, during the summer session the MONT instructors could be seen communicating a rather well-defined orienting narrative to the beginning teachers directing them toward the program’s generalized object of teaching—a “cosmic vision” of a peaceful society requiring a positive and “whole” image of the child. Indeed, MONT’s vision for teaching was articulated to the program’s beginners in specific terms drawn from Maria Montessori’s writings. In addition, the instructors shared the contours of what it looked like to invest your heart in this vision—to desire it enough to want to spread it and, when necessary, guard it against dilution. Where the prioritization of CTP’s generalized objects of teaching was less certain to me as an outsider, I felt more confident that Montessori’s “cosmic vision” was MONT’s primary generalized object.

*Indications of beginners’ heartfelt investment in MONT’s generalized object of teaching*

In my analysis there were indications that MONT beginners not only understood their program’s generalized object of teaching, but were also signaling a heartfelt investment in it. For example, in a Montessori Philosophy session Paula had the group sit in a circle on the floor while she read aloud the storybook *I Stood Upon a Mountain* (1979), by Aileen Fisher, in which a child goes on a journey around the world greeting those he encounters by stating, “Wonderful world” [MONT-philo-070814]! In return they tell him creation stories from their cultures. Commenting on the story a beginner said it could provoke students to consider “your cosmic task and place in the world, and does it truly matter what creation story you believe?” David likewise mentioned how, in a classroom, he could see it as “a springboard for opening up a door to that question of, ‘How did we all get here? Where did I come from?’” In both instances the beginners seemed to understand the book’s usefulness for providing a “cosmic education.” But how it spoke to their heart was less clear. By comparison, another beginner responded, “I love ‘Wonderful world!’” as
a greeting and just the idea that cosmic energy hopefully instills that sense of awe—‘Wonderful world!’—in all of us.” Though brief, the comment offered a sense of what she loved about the story and hoped “cosmic energy” would do for children. It may be that her peers also experienced the story in a heartfelt manner, though it was less evident in their responses.

After discussing the story, Paula then invited the group to share thoughts on the readings they had done on Montessori as providing a cosmic education. Again, some beginners revealed a developing understanding of the program’s generalized object of teaching but not necessarily a heartfelt investment in it. One beginner, for example, explained how up until the readings everything about the method had been presented as “so orderly and so precise.” Sharing what she gained from the readings she stated,

[The early lessons] taught me some amazing concepts, but it wasn’t all that extra stuff, that completely holistic approach that we’ve been learning… So reading about cosmic education really brought it all together for me and helped me see how it all fits together, like how it works. [MONT-philo-070814]

She thus expressed the connection she could see between the earlier conceptual material and the “holistic approach” of Montessori. Whether her heart was invested in that approach was less evident.

Other beginners showed more signs of a heartfelt investment by staking a position on the “cosmic education” ideal framed by instructors and course materials. Justine, for example, referred to a quote from their readings about how a focus on cosmic education would produce the kind of selfless adults they were after as Montessori teachers. As she stated,

I really liked how [the author] said that [Montessori teachers] put the common good ahead of common gain because … it’s a dog eat dog world and people go into a survival
of the fittest mode … and it’s really important that we teach our children that we have so much more to gain by working together rather than trying to knock each other down. And I think that that’s something that really needs to be emphasized. [MONT-philo-070814]

In her articulation of a peaceful society, one she saw as counter to the competitive one we live in, children would be taught to cooperate and “put the common good ahead of common gain.” Such a vision of peace was one that she “really liked” and wanted to “really emphasize,” suggesting that her heart was invested in the idea of teaching to fulfill the object of a peaceful society.

In analyzing the data, there were other similar indications of hearts arguably invested Montessori’s objects of teaching. In our first interview, for example, David expressed how much the Montessori philosophy resonated with him as a teacher. Comparing his experiences teaching in traditional settings, he remarked, “The whole Montessori philosophy for me is just… so much more calming, so much more fulfilling … There’s so much more depth to it…” [David-int1-10:47]. Later in the interview he elaborated on how this sense of depth helped him situate his teaching in something more grand and compelling. As he framed it for me, the summer training had afforded him a chance to really step back and take a wide-angle view of what an education could accomplish. From that vantage he could see that it was more than just skills acquisition but also about helping each student to be “a productive member of society that’s gonna improve our world” [David-int1-23:28]. Seeing students through the lens of Montessori philosophy, David therefore appeared to have a broader and perhaps more ambitious view of what his teaching could accomplish.

Along with the “depth” of the Montessori philosophy, some beginners seemed moved by its emphasis on the whole child. This was evident during a small-group activity in a Montessori
Philosophy session as three beginners shared what they liked about Montessori. At one point a beginner commented to her two group mates,

I think for me a meaningful part of the philosophy is just the focus on the whole child and meeting their needs. I think that’s so important … the part [of Montessori] that allows us to really focus on the child and meeting those needs, and to open up that door for learning for them: it's huge! It's nice to have that permission within this philosophy. [MONT-philo-061714]

As with Justine, this beginner expressed how “important” she considered a component of Montessori’s object of teaching. For her it was the “permission” it gave teachers to “really focus” on the child and her needs. Her mention that the philosophy was “meaningful,” coupled with her affective language (“it’s huge!”), suggested that her heart was likely invested in the whole-child component of MONT’s object of teaching.

**A desire to spread Montessori.** In my analysis of the MONT instructors I also noted that a desire for the program’s object of teaching might be evident in a desire to spread Montessori. It did appear that the MONT beginners considered Montessori preferable to “traditional” public school teaching and thus worth promulgating. For example, in an interview David explained how he felt that students of color weren’t getting a good education through the traditional approach. But he admitted not thinking Montessori was the answer until he saw firsthand “how amazing it was” and found himself asking, “Why isn’t everybody doing this [David-int1-19:13]?” Though he admitted sometimes wavering on its universal appeal, he said that he found himself landing on the view that “you could make it work” for all children. In fact, he exclaimed to his cohort early on in the summer, “I’m excited to start the Montessori revolución” [MONT-seminar-061714]! It
therefore seemed that David’s heartfelt investment in Montessori was increasing with greater exposure to it and he was energized to spread it as a teacher.

A similar interest in spreading Montessori emerged after Paula showed the beginners an animated TED talk by Sir Ken Robinson on the issues with the industrial model of teaching. After the video, a beginner said that it “struck” her while watching it that in traditional school there’s only one right answer and children need to get there, but in this thing we call life there’s so many different answers, so many different ways of going about it. And ultimately we just want our children to be successful in life—to lead a life.

She thus appeared to contrast traditional education as presented in the video to the more holistic view of education discussed in the course and program more generally. Using “we” as if speaking as a member of a collective, she then expressed a desire for children to “lead a life.” Though she didn’t elaborate on the point, she seemed to be conveying that Montessorians wanted more for children than academic success.

While discussing the video other beginners likewise gave me the impression that they had a heartfelt desire for schooling to be different. Seemingly frustrated, a beginner stated to her peers, “It strikes me as odd that [public education] is not working… and it has me wondering, ‘When will it change? When people will see that it needs to change and how will it happen? It’s just really discouraging.’” This prompted another beginner to express her view that “paradigms are really hard to change.” Someone then suggested that things in education needed to “hit rock bottom and then change would happen.” Perhaps wanting to lighten the dour mood, Tara observed,
The generation that’s coming up is more aware … So yah, it’s got to hit rock bottom… but then progressively [that generation] is going to be creating more and more schools.

[MONT-philo-071114]

Building on her sense of hope, a peer remarked,

I just think about all of us here, this cohort in [MONT], and just thinking that every year there’s going to be twenty-five new teachers in here to get the word out and … start the work. [MONT-philo-071114]

Both women thus seemed to take heart in knowing that they were apart of a movement that was growing. Offering the last comment before break, a beginner observed how a desire for change could be palpable but needed to be marshaled effectively. As she explained, “The thing is, as you become aware of [the problems] you want things to change, for the whole system to change.” She added that too often top-down initiatives like No Child Left Behind failed to effect “sustainable change”, so in her view the only way to produce the changes they desired was through “bottom-up” change by teachers like themselves “spreading [Montessori] in our own communities, and that catching on.”

In such an exchange, the MONT beginners shared their “awareness” of a perceived problem—“traditional” education—and crafted a hopeful vision for how they and others similarly moved by Montessori might make a difference. This desire to spread Montessori came up more often in my analysis than a desire to prevent Montessori’s dilution. An exception was a reference Alex made in an interview to “Monte-somethings,” a term she overheard colleagues at her residency school using to describe hybrid schools that compromised the Montessori vision with traditional techniques, materials, and standardized testing [Alex-int2-13:27]. She said that it
was “cool” to have “a head at school that’s really into keeping it as authentic as possible.” But she did not elaborate on why it was cool to her.

Along with the generalized object of teaching, another object—to serve children in underserved communities—was also brought up by those beginners who had served disenfranchised students in public schools prior to entering MONT. Kate, who worked in a Montessori charter, noted that after a few years teaching underserved children she had come to appreciate it as a “way [to] give back to the world [Kate-int1-04:13].” In fact, her experience working with children in impoverished communities had made her particularly sensitive to their vulnerability and unique needs. She mentioned getting defensive when her MONT classmates showed their naivety about race and poverty while bad mouthing public schools. Such naivety also bothered David, who described to me how he found his calling during his training for public certification (at City Teacher Prep).² “One of the things that I think pushed me the most,” he explained, “was … the idea of Latinos having the highest dropout rate” [David-int1-00:16]. A self-identified Latino, he considered this issue a primary reason for his wanting to be a teacher. He credited his working in Title I schools with instilling in him this “passion” to affect the lives of children of color living in poverty [David-int1-03:20].

Justine said that she also got defensive when peers wrote off public school teachers and children. Before entering MONT, she had pursued certification in college and then took a teaching position in a large urban district. She remembered starting out driven to make a difference: “I was on a mission to teach in the inner city and save people’s lives” [Justine-int1-01:20]. But it wasn’t long before she “got a major slap in the face with reality” and her passion for teaching dimmed. Then she found Montessori, which she credited with reviving that passion. She mentioned how at MONT it felt “really nice to be around really positive people” because her
the past two years “had been just filled with negativity” [Justine-int1-10:51]. Despite the negativity, she saw value in the experience and said of the experience,

I wouldn't trade it for the world, because although as crazy as it was, those children that I worked with, like the things that they had to go through on a daily basis, whether it be abuse of parents, lack of parents, drug addicted parents, whatever, to just see how strong they were, and not only that but they never complained about their lives, and that struck me. [Justine-int1-10:51]

It thus appeared that the experience had left a formative impression on Justine, and she did admit to still thinking about her former students and said, “A little part of me kind of feels like I abandoned them” [Justine-int1-24:50]. Whether or not those students and their plight would linger in her imagination nurturing a standing desire to serve underserved students that one day might be rekindled was unclear. Or would that desire wane as she completed her residency within a private Montessori school that appeared to cater mostly to whites. Of the three beginners, David seemed most invested in seeking ways to integrate the two objects of teaching—serving underserved students and fulfilling the cosmic vision—so the Montessori philosophy could encompass social justice issues and allow him to be of better service to students living in poverty.

In summary, the data I have presented, mostly comments from summer session courses, offers evidence that at least David, Justine, and two of their MONT peers had hearts invested in fulfilling Montessori’s vision of peace through teaching to the whole child. It is worth noting that there was no indication in the data that MONT beginners were not invested in or felt hesitant about MONT’s generalized object of teaching. Also, four MONT beginners, including David and Tara, expressed a desire to spread the Montessori vision of teaching. Finally, the hearts of three
focal beginners—Kate, David, and Justine—who had taught or were still teaching in public schools still seemed invested in another object of teaching—to serve underserved students.

**Pedagogical object(s) at MONT**

*An orienting narrative of inspiring children to become self-directed, joyful learners*

Among the desirable pedagogical aims discussed throughout the summer session, two in particular came up frequently. The first was for children to become independent or self-directed. As Nancy stated early on in the summer, “We want [the children] to be self-motivated… self-directed” [MONT-intro-061714]. Justifying this desired trait, she added, “If you’re motivated, then you can do what you want to do in your life.” Nancy stressed the importance of promoting independence throughout the Classroom Leadership course. It was something she appeared to drive home while discussing why they should set up a Montessori classroom in an orderly and logical fashion. As she explained to the beginners,

> It enables the child to be more independent and to be more self-sufficient. So that’s the real bottom line to this, because that’s what we really want for our children. Yes, we want them to be attracted to the materials. Yes, we want the materials to be organized so that they can figure out what’s next and ask for another lesson. But all of that comes down to—we really want them to be independent and self-sufficient. [MONT-classlead-072114]

In this comment, Nancy can be seen not only communicating the pedagogical aim but the fact that such an aim is desired by the Montessori community—it is what “we want for [the] children (italics mine).”

According to the instructors, independence was the reason why the student-teacher ratio was relatively high in Montessori classrooms. As Paula explained, “The more adults you put in...
the more responsibility you take away from the children” [MONT-philo-062414]. Above all, instructors stressed that independent children were well-behaved children, which made the classroom a model for a peaceful society. “If we can have students realize that the only thing they can control is themselves and their actions,” Nancy informed the group, “that’s how we bring about peace in our classrooms” [MONT-classlead-072214].

Related to this desire for independence, the MONT instructors also highlighted a desire among Montessori teachers for children to find what Nancy referred to as a “deep and lasting” happiness in doing productive work [MONT-classlead-072214]. The MONT instructors stressed how it was important that children want to come to school to do the work of learning—that they find schoolwork pleasurable. In a Classroom Leadership session Nancy referred them to Maria Montessori’s belief that “children are hard wired to find joy in work” and suggested that their job was to nurture this natural tendency through their pedagogy [MONT-seminar-072414]. She cautioned that grades and other extrinsic motivators, such as “smiley faces” or “stickers,” threatened to “squelch” this tendency. As she explained to the beginners,

At a certain point grades can become the thing that children work for. And that’s not what we want. Work is it’s own reward. There’s joy in the learning. That’s what we want. [MONT-classlead-072414]

Again, Nancy can be seen establishing a pedagogical aim—“joy in learning”—as something that is desired by teachers within the Montessori community.

The instructors stressed that despite a desire for children to see joy in productive work they must resist the temptation to forcefully impose this view on children. As Paula explained, “[The children] are engaged in the construction of themselves. It’s not you molding them … into what you think they should be” [MONT-philo-061714]. She noted how they could make certain
ways of being more attractive to children, but they needed to respect their right to be themselves and grow at their own pace. Forcing growth would undermine student agency and thus the pedagogical object of self-directed learners.

Over the summer the MONT instructors discussed and demonstrated many teaching practices that seemed aimed at realizing the program’s pedagogical object. For example, Nancy spent an entire Classroom Leadership session on types of planners that, she explained, facilitated independence by having students organize and keep track of lessons they had done and needed to do. Likewise, in the Practical Life course the instructor stressed how seemingly mundane classroom chores, like fixing a broken chair, sweeping a floor, or sewing a torn piece of fabric, could be recast for children as opportunities for joyful and productive work. Of the practices discussed, however, my analysis indicated that the instructors tended to highlight two specific practices during the summer session: making lessons appealing and careful observation. They also discussed and modeled how Montessori teachers “internalize” the lessons and practices.

While observing the instructors, it appeared that making lessons appealing had two components. The first was in the quality of the lesson delivery. Defining qualities of good Montessori teachers, Paula informed the cohort, “You’ve gotta be a storyteller… an amazing storyteller” [MONT-philo-061714]. Jeff likewise mentioned the need to be a “great storyteller” while delivering lessons [MONT-universe-063014]. He told the group that it was an essential skill for making learning appealing to children, and suggested that if students were sufficiently captivated by a teacher’s storytelling then they would be driven to try out materials without the teacher’s urging. The second component of making lessons appealing was rendering materials enticing in a way that, even after the lesson, children would feel compelled to pick them up and explore them on their own. This appeared to be a major focus of the Design course, where the
beginners were shown how to create well-crafted Montessori materials that would, as the instructor phrased it, “call the child” over to investigate [MONT-design-071814].

Along with making lessons appealing the instructors emphasized the importance of observing students in the classroom. Early in the summer Paula suggested that the program would develop in them “an ability to observe children carefully” [MONT-philo-061714]. She explained how Maria Montessori was a scientist who was constantly studying children in an effort to understand them. Paula recounted a story of how Montessori had once redirected the attention of scholars curious about her method from exclusively observing her to observing the children in her classroom. She wanted them to see her method was most evident in the children’s self-directed enthusiasm for learning. She also wanted them to see that a crux of her method was the careful study of children. As Nancy framed it, “We want to teach with our antenna up” [MONT-classlead-072914]. Doing so, she explained, required that they “take mental notes” of students and effectively document those observations to establish a rich record for each child.

The instructors often used the term “internalization” to describe a state of lesson familiarity and comfort that seemed evident in the way they delivered their lessons without referring to their albums or plans. In a demonstration of a math lesson, for example, Lynn (Math instructor) began by quietly retrieving a box from a shelf full of materials. With slow and deliberate motions, she removed chains of beads and arranged them on a low presentation table in the center of the room. Eventually a pattern emerged that revealed how to multiply polynomials. A woman remarked that she had learned FOIL but never seen it so tactile and visual. Lynn then showed how using variables in math is analogous to using a “secret code,” and finished the lesson by documenting an algorithm for multiplying binomials [MONT-math-
062314]. At this logical yet seemingly magical transformation of beads to symbols to a mathematical formula, several students expressed amazement (Beginner: “What?!”).

In another example Jeff delivered a Universe lesson on the formation of the Earth using a lumpy ball of clay. He explained how the students’ handling of the clay ball represented the collision of the Earth into debris, which caused it to heat up. He asked what would happen if everyone in the room got up and ran around in a tight space, and a beginner replied that they would bump into one another and get warm. To this Jeff added that eventually they would “accrete” material [MONT-universe-070114]. He then handed out little pieces of clay to everyone and asked that they add their piece of clay to the ball as it made it’s way around the room. When the ball reached the last beginner he noted how it was mostly in a spherical shape and that it was warm, which the beginner holding the ball confirmed for the group.

Over the duration of their courses Lynn and Jeff would each model dozens of lessons with what seemed to be relative ease. They did, on occasion, refer to their albums, though mostly to direct the beginners to variations of lessons or instructional decisions they had made on the fly. Rarely did they appear to need them as a script while delivering a lesson. This was the case with all of the MONT instructors I observed during the summer session. They seemed to have internalized the lessons and to set a benchmark for what was possible with enough time and practice.

The MONT instructors expected the beginners to have “internalized” the many Montessori practices and lessons such that the albums would no longer be needed. Nancy pointed out that most Montessori teachers kept their albums in a closet out of sight and she cautioned them:
If you do have [the albums] in the classroom … please don’t let them be a crutch. When you come to do your performance assessments, you’re going to do them without your albums. So you might as well start practicing without your albums just right away. It’s the only way you’re really going to internalize them. [MONT-classlead-072114]

To alleviate concerns over how daunting this seemed, Nancy assured the beginners that full memorization of lessons wasn’t expected by the end of the summer. She noted that imperfection was inevitable and if handled effectively, a sign that they were a good fit in the Montessori system. As she explained,

There’s going to be some parts that you can teach, maybe without even having to refer to the album ... and other things you’re going to have to work and work to get internalized enough just to get to a child. And that means that you are a normal human, and we like normal humans teaching our children. So please do not set such a high standard of excellence for yourself that you make yourself crazy this coming year. [MONT-classlead-072414]

Indeed, on several occasions the MONT instructors acknowledged the enormity of the task of internalizing the curriculum and the Montessori method of instruction. Jeff admitted to the group that it had taken him many years to become comfortable with letting go of teaching to the whole class in a more traditional fashion so he could adopt a more “free flowing” instructional style that permitted him to “follow the kids” [MONT-universe-070114]. Lest they take such advice as a challenge, Nancy warned them, “Don’t set up expectation that you will be the be all and end all of the classroom” [MONT-classlead-071714]. She noted that they needed to give themselves time to hone their skills as new Montessori teachers.
Along with discussing and modeling the merits of preferred practices, the MONT instructors frequently contrasted them with practices they opposed. For example, the Language instructor reminded them that they should avoid instructional methods that bored children and exclaimed, “Montessorians don’t lecture” [MONT-language-071414]! She also felt that they should avoid forcing students to push ahead with material that made them uncomfortable. “We take the child where she is and lead her gently on,” she explained, “when she’s ready.” The MONT instructors also scorned standardized testing, with one instructor going so far as to claim of public education, “The test drives everything” [MONT-math-061814]!

In an activity that seemed intended to show what Montessori stood for and opposed instructionally, Paula had the beginners co-construct a tower with blocks upon which were statements that included: “Joy and love are absent”; “Classes by grade level”; “Use of praise, rewards, bribes”; “Lot of worksheets”; “Competition is encouraged”; “Students have little freedom” [MONT-philo-071114]. After they completed the tower Paula said that it was a reminder of all the things that, as a teacher, they “don’t want to be doing.” She then handed out new blocks and they built another tower out of what she referred to as the features of an “authentic Montessori classroom.” These features included: “Beautiful, simple, harmonious environment”; “Culture of work…”; “Integrated practical life … peace education”; “Focusing on true needs of child, not wants of parent”; and “Auto education; children primarily learn through their own activity.” With the new tower built, Paula explained that there was a limit to how many of these desired items could be missing before a classroom was no longer authentically Montessori. To illustrate, she had beginners remove one block at a time until the tower crumbled. Beside it the “bad tower,” as Paula called it, still stood tall, so she invited a beginner to come up and kick it over. As with my early claim that a heart invested in Montessori’s object of teaching
might be evident in a defense of it, the activity seemed to convey to the beginners that a desire for MONT’s pedagogical object would be evident in their opposition to certain instructional practices.

Finally, it is worth noting that in addition to the pedagogical object I have thus far documented, there were signs of another object that was desired, though cautiously. It surfaced during the tower building activity as Paula handed out a block indicating that among the desired features of Montessori was the “development of strong academic skills” [MONT-philo-071114]. As if anticipating the beginners’ surprise that they should care about this, Paula said that there was no reason why their students couldn’t receive solid academic skills through a Montessori education. Later in the same session Paula admitted to the group that “testing is a reality” and “we want our students to do pretty well on them” [MONT-philo-071114]. To qualify her comment she added that “test-taking is a practical skill that children need” and noted how, as a head of school, she administered tests to provide her teachers with target areas for academic improvement. In her view, “[tests] can be like red flags… and help us see certain things.” This concession of the value of testing and the development of strong academic skills ran counter to much of what the instructors had conveyed throughout the summer. But it was a reminder to the beginners and to me that student achievement was vying for attention with MONT’s desired object of producing self-directed, joyful learners.

To recap, during the summer session the MONT instructors indicated that Montessori teachers were aiming to produce self-directed, joyful learners through inspiring lesson delivery, careful observation, and internalization of the lessons. A beginner whose heart was invested in becoming a Montessori teacher and fulfilling its cosmic vision would presumably show that they wanted to get better at these facets of the method.
Indications of beginners’ heartfelt investment in MONT’s pedagogical object

As with the program’s object of teaching, MONT beginners similarly showed that they understood their program’s pedagogical object and it appeared that they had a heartfelt investment in it. Showing that she understood the aim of self-directed learning, Alex told me in an interview that Montessori teachers emphasized discovery by “not giving away too much and letting them be responsible for the learning part and not us teaching them because it’s really all about them doing it by themselves” [Alex-int2-16:15]. Tara similarly observed that the teacher set up the conditions for students to grow and avoided setting limits on their learning, which entailed “giving enough to the child to where they can take that information and expand it” [Tara-int1-08:34]. A few beginners also showed that they understood the aim of cultivating joy. For example, when Nancy asked what joy looked like in the classroom, one beginner suggested that it was when students were deep into their work and another said that it was evident in the “skip” you saw as a child took out and arranged lesson materials on an unrolled mat [MONT-classlead-063014]. There was also some recognition that boring teaching was detrimental to learning in Montessori classrooms. For example, when asked what it took to be a Montessori teacher, Tara suggested that it required “passion” for the instructional content and materials and she elaborated by stating, “I find that if I’m so excited about giving a lesson, they can tell and they get so excited about it. And if I’m not, they can tell” [Tara-int2-08:18].

Along with showing that they understood the pedagogical object, some MONT beginners offered signs that their hearts were excited by and perhaps invested in the methods they were being taught. For example, during a small group discussion on the Montessori philosophy, Mike told his peers, “There’s a quote from Montessori: ‘The hand is the tool of the intellect.’ That’s one of my favorite things” [MONT-philo-061714]. Memorizing a “favorite” quote revealed at Chapter 5
least a small measure of heartfelt investment, but it seemed to me that such investment was more
evident in how the MONT beginners practiced teaching during the summer session.

During a Universe session, for example, I watched as Carol practiced a lesson on the
formation and lifecycle of stars by herself [MONT-universe-071114]. Having retrieved a mat
from a bin and the lesson materials, she carefully unrolled the mat on the floor and then laid out a
number of laminated pictures of stars. She also positioned a large, rolled-up piece of black felt
that she then unrolled as the lesson progressed to reveal the stages of star evolution. Beside her
was the Universe lesson album open to the page with the lesson. Before starting the lesson she
looked it over. She then set it aside and began to recite the lesson script under her breath,
pantomiming hand gestures as if speaking enthusiastically to children. Such careful attention to
detail and effort to deliver the lesson with the aim of engaging and inspiring students arguably
demonstrated that Carol’s heart was invested in her practice.

In another example from the same practice session, I watched David deliver a Universe
lesson to a small group of peers on the origins of amino acids. Before beginning, he exhaled
loudly and forcefully as if to signal that he was getting himself in the proper mindset. He then
dove into delivering the lesson, speaking in an upbeat and cheerful tone. At one point he gave the
“students” a sentence stem to use: “A living thing is _____.“ He politely asked them to turn to
one another and use the stem, which they did by filling in things like “oak tree” and “my
brother.” From there he mentioned how long ago, his eyes widening at the suggestion of deep
time, there were molecules in the primordial sea. Using construction paper circles he reminded
them of the major elements of organic life: carbon (C), hydrogen (H), oxygen (O), and nitrogen
(N). With foam spheres representing chains of these elements (i.e., C-H-O-N), he discussed how
they formed amino acids. He concluded the lesson in under ten minutes. Turning to his peers he
sighed and said, “Better than I was imagining.” Like Carol, he worked to deliver a lesson in an engaging and inspiring way. He also seemed to have expectations for himself that, in this case, he was pleased to have exceeded.

These two examples served to illustrate how some of MONT beginners were invested in getting better as Montessori instructors. Over the course of the summer session I witnessed many other similar moments. However, there were also rare moments where MONT beginners showed signs of disinterest in practicing the method. For example, during one practice session I saw a beginner sigh and say to a peer, “We still have a half an hour” [MONT-universe-070214]. She said that she wanted to look busy, and jokingly held up a small globe and, giggling as she did so, pointed to the land and then the water. In a sarcastic tone she asked, “Would you like to touch the water?” He laughed. These beginners may have desired the program’s pedagogical object, but if so it was not evident in their relative disinterest in practicing that day.

As the MONT beginners discussed their experiences in Montessori classrooms, they would sometimes indicate pleasure in teaching the method in a way that suggested a heartfelt investment in the pedagogical object. For example, in an interview Mike described the satisfaction he felt while helping a child succeed. As he explained,

There’s nothing like a breakthrough. To see that, it’s really, really nice. It feels very worthwhile. [Mike-int1-09:24]

Tara likewise told me that she was “so excited” about the experience teaching the method in her residency classroom. When I asked her what made her excited, she responded,

It’s just… seeing the progression and those “A-ha!” moments that sparked interest. Like right now, my class is really into research and Native Americans, and foot tracks and
footprints, and just finding … what is interesting about a certain animal. I guess that spark of interest is just amazing to see it just play out. [Tara-int2-00:47]

Like Mike, she also found pleasure in the “breakthrough” or “A-ha! moments” that a teacher could bring about as a teacher.

During the interview Tara went on to reveal her growing sense of confidence and comfort with method. I asked her how she would explain the experience to her family, and she answered by stating,

That I don't feel like it's a job! I feel like I am having so much fun … One of the biggest challenges I think I thought I would face is, “Oh my gosh, how do you know what material you are going to make for them? Or, how do you know what they are going to like? Or, how do you know what is next?” And I think that now, I constantly find myself being like, “Nope, they need this material. I'm gonna make it tonight. I'm gonna bust it out, and I'm gonna get it tomorrow.” So I spend time making those materials and … I didn't know I would be so invested in wanting to make so many materials… [Tara-int2-02:41]

Tara’s concern from the summer session—identifying appropriate materials to engage students and keep them progressing academically—seemed to have dissipated somewhat with the residency experience. To her surprise, she had become “invested in wanting” to make materials for the students. Her heart thus seemed into the method as she communicated her growing sense of not only confidence but also her desire for teaching.

Further evidence that the hearts of at least some of the MONT beginners were becoming invested in the Montessori method was in how defensive they got when it seemed that others outside of MONT didn’t understand the method or were reluctant to trust it. David recalled how
a colleague had once mentioned how, as a former Montessori student, he had just playing with
blocks all day. David seemed bothered that his colleague was indictment the method based on one
recollection. He said that he wished he knew then what he knew from his summer training so he
could explain how the colleague’s teacher “wasn't placing that balance of freedom within limits
clearly” [David-int1-20:37]. In his view, this explanation would have revealed to the naysayer
how the method had benefits when properly applied. Over the summer session, others expressed
how it bothered them when people served in Montessori classrooms and began dismissing the
method without digging into it or giving it time. One beginner, for example, recounted how hard
she had worked with a teaching colleague to “get her to trust the method” [MONT-classlead-
071714].

Pointing toward their own desire to know and get comfortable with the method, the
MONT beginners acknowledged that getting good at Montessori teaching was going to take
time. During her residency, Alex mentioned feeling “a little bit out of control” in the classroom
but was comforted by the knowledge that it could take “a few years to get into the groove” of
Montessori teaching [Alex-int2-34:20]. Tara also expressed concern over not being “fully there,
confident with myself and confident with just the lessons and modeling” [Tara-int1-13:06]
Similar to Alex she felt that “as the years go by and I’m teaching I'll learn” [Tara-int1-11:56].
Each of these beginners seemed comfortable with the prospect of years spent mastering their
craft, which suggested a heartfelt investment in that craft.

From my analysis of data, three of the seven focal MONT beginners offered evidence
that their hearts were invested in the program’s observed pedagogical object—to inspire children
to become self-directed, joyful learners. Such investment was evident as two of the beginners—
David and Carol—practiced the method in a way suggesting an effort to internalize the lessons.

Chapter 5
Also, three focal beginners—Mike, Tara, and David—along with a MONT peer expressed their pleasure with Montessori teaching and what they had experienced while using the method. Finally, both Alex and Tara commented on how they expected learning the method to take time, suggesting that a desire to get better might be treated as a long-term project.

**Ontological object(s) at MONT**

*An orienting narrative to be engaged in transforming yourself into a person capable of focusing attention on children*

Having discussed MONT’s object of teaching and pedagogical object, I turn my attention to the orienting narratives that conveyed the ontological object. Generally, my analysis of MONT indicated that the instructors wanted the beginners to see how a heart invested in Montessori required a commitment to transforming one’s self. This was made evident at the start of the summer session when Nancy told the cohort that Montessori teacher education was about promoting “transformation rather than giving information” and she warned them, “Be prepared for some changes in your life” [MONT-intro-061614]. In the Montessori Philosophy course, Paula similarly noted how the program would change the beginners by asking that they slow down their lives to “begin to make that conversion” into Montessori teachers [MONT-philo-061714]. On the last day of the summer session Jill (program director) reminded them that such teachers were what Maria Montessori referred to as “spiritual pilgrims united by a bond of love for children” [MONT-lastday-080714].

Telling stories of their own paths into Montessori, the instructors conveyed a sense that the conversion or pilgrimage was welcomed, especially if one had negative experiences with “traditional” public school teaching. Paula told the cohort about how she had started teaching in a traditional public classroom where she saw how the kids were bored by the material, which
prompted her to think, “Huh? I’m not going to teach this” [MONT-philo-061714]. She recalled visiting a Montessori school and being impressed by the students’ enthusiasm for learning. Likewise, Lynn (Math instructor) explained how she had “burned out” in her first teaching job at a public school, noting that she found the constant changes in curriculum irritating [MONT-math-061714]. By comparison, she appreciated Montessori’s stability. And Jeff told the group that he had started teaching in “traditional education” and said of the experience, “I just knew it didn’t fit who I wanted to be as a teacher” [MONT-universe-063014]. He then mentioned how a summer teaching opportunity introduced him to Montessori. As he described it,

I just fell in love [with Montessori] working under a primary teacher … and just watching her interact with the children, and how she respected the children … that just changed me. [MONT-universe-063014]

Jeff’s characterization of the “fit” and how he “fell in love” with Montessori suggested to me that his heart was already invested in a respectful image of children prior to the experience. Observing the primary teacher then seemed to enrich his imagination for how teaching could instantiate that image. His story recounted the moment he “fell in love” with Montessori—the more visceral feeling he had that he and tradition were a match. Compared to the years he estimated that it took him to gain comfort with the method (something I noted earlier in the chapter) the falling in love was relatively quick. I mention this because it seemed that the “transformation” or “conversion” that the instructors were encouraging presumed that the beginners had already fallen in love with Montessori. The transformative work was then a matter of coming to know yourself better as a vehicle for that love.

This transformative work began on the first day of the summer session as Jill (program director) had the beginners read aloud a poem about making new beginnings. After, she invited
them to ponder the question, “What is the new horizon in you that wants to be seen” [MONT-intro-061614]? From there she had them list things on a notecard that they “personally need[ed] to leave behind in order to be fully present” in class that summer. Those cards were put into a box that was discarded as a symbolic gesture of their transition from the past to the present. The idea, however, was not to discard all of your self, and later that day Nancy informed the beginners that the program intentionally brought in a variety of Montessori instructors to show them how different people could take up the method in different ways. She then stated, “We want you to have permission to have your personality available to your teaching” [MONT-intro-061614]. Later in the summer she also invited them to imagine how they would start teaching in the fall by implementing “the lessons that excite you and you’re most passionate about [MONT-classlead-072214].” Such comments suggested that part of becoming a Montessori teacher was coming to appreciate how one would uniquely inhabit the role.

There were, however, specific aspects of that role that the MONT instructors conveyed to the cohort. For example, in a Montessori Philosophy session Paula discussed how the “whole-child” dimension of Montessori would require them to become increasingly comfortable with “taking a secondary role” in the classroom and to reduce their need to be the “center of attention” and “always in charge” [MONT-philo-061714]. A week later she reiterated this point by telling them that “best Montessori teachers tend to be … more of a guide rather than an instructor” [MONT-philo-062414]. Then during a Classroom Leadership session Nancy encouraged the beginners to see how the “tapes in our heads” of how adults treat children might be faulty and in need of revision to embrace Montessori’s view of “children as inherently good” [MONT-classlead-063014]. What the instructors thus seemed to be suggesting was that part of transforming into a Montessori teacher required (re)imagining the dynamics between teacher-
student and adult-child such that the teacher/adult did not position herself as so important that a clear and positive view of children was distorted.

The MONT instructors also gave advice to the beginners on how to sustain a positive view of children by entreatng them to always look inward when faced with challenges. If their needs were not being met, Nancy advised that they “look in the mirror” first before blaming others [MONT-classlead-072914]. In her experience, teachers who blamed others were difficult to be around and she recommended finding appropriate “coping mechanisms” to stay positive. Though not named as such, one of the coping mechanisms that she illustrated was a strong belief in self-control that, she claimed, allowed her to be happy. She told the beginners that she preferred to give everyone the benefit of the doubt and explained,

You can choose how you view people... The only thing you have control over in your life—the only thing you have control over in your life—is yourself and your reactions.

That’s it. [MONT-classlead-072114]

Earlier in the summer while advising the beginners on how to deal with difficult students, Paula similarly encouraged them to consider what was under their control by stating:

My basic thing is and the way I was trained is, if something’s not working, look to yourself and [there are] two things you can do: you can change the environment or you can change yourself. You cannot just change the student. You either have to change yourself and how you respond to it or how you present [the lesson]… [MONT-philo-062414]

Paula thus reminded them that in classrooms they had the power (and the responsibility) to change the children’s work environment because preparing the environment was a major part of...
their role as a Montessori teacher. But often, especially with adults, Nancy suggested their only recourse might be a positive view of people and a capacity for emotional control.

Working to transform one’s self was also treated as something undertaken for one’s health and happiness as a teacher. Toward the end of the summer Nancy spent two Classroom Leadership courses advising the beginners on ways of preparing themselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually to become a teacher. She cautioned them against allowing a “burning desire” to help children result in their overworking and eventually leaving teaching. In fact, as she explained, working too hard could paradoxically undermine what they hoped to achieve through that work:

I’m here to say, maybe for the first time, but not for the last time, that if you can’t take care of you, then you can’t be there for the children ... If you find that you are not doing a good job of taking care of yourself, you have to, (again with emphasis) you have to say, “What can I let go of? What can I delegate?” Because I want all of you guys in this career long term. [MONT-classlead-072914]

Such a comment contributed to a sense that the MONT instructors wanted the beginners to know that they were supported, and self-transformation should not feel like a complete overhaul of the self or a major compromise of personal values. Rather, it should involve allowing the best of themselves to emerge in service of children and Montessori’s cosmic vision of a peaceful society. To make this point, on the last day of the summer session Jill read aloud the following quote from Fred Rogers:

You don’t ever have to do anything sensational for people to love you. When I say, “It’s you I like,” I’m talking about that part of you that knows that life is far more than anything you can ever see or hear or touch … that deep part of you that allows you to
stand for those things without which humankind cannot survive: love that conquers hate, peace that rises triumphant over war, and justice that proves more powerful than greed. So in all that you do in all of your life, I wish you the strength and the grace to make those choices which will allow you and your neighbor to become the best of whoever you are. [MONT-lastday-080714]

Echoing the sentiment in her closing remarks of the summer, Nancy stated, “Everyday you need to bring the best possible you” [MONT-lastday-080714]. But she reminded them to not look far because, “you’ve got what they need.”

Nancy’s reminder seemed applicable to the instructors, too, and how they had what the beginners needed as they crossed the threshold to become Montessorians. This suggested an extension of the program’s ontological object that was being modeled for the beginners—an imagined future in which they matured into veterans capable of providing what beginners needed, of speaking for the tradition and advising others on its salient features and core practices. They could become instructors. Or they might start a side business selling their expertise. On a table in the MONT facility I noticed business cards and flyers advertising Montessori consultants and homemade materials for purchase. Such opportunities for professional immersion in the tradition revealed other dimensions of the ontological transformation the beginners were undertaking that, while not made explicit in the summer session to my knowledge, seemed worth noting.

In summary, the MONT instructors were observed drawing attention to the ontological demands of inhabiting MONT’s image of the ideal Montessori teacher. They noted how Montessori teachers refrained from being the center of attention and looked inward to change as needed so the focus remained on the children. Yet the instructors invited the beginners to inhabit
the role in personally meaningful ways and wanted them see that they already possessed within themselves much of what they needed to become Montessori teachers.

*Indications of beginners’ heartfelt investment in MONT’s ontological object*

My analysis suggests that MONT beginners entered the program because of their sense of a good match between themselves and Montessori. Over the summer session they expressed no obvious signs of discomfort with the prospect of transforming into the kind of teacher framed by instructors. During second interviews, however, which were conducted as beginners started their residency, it seemed that those with public school teaching experience were having some trouble with fully making the transition.

Many of the MONT beginners in the observed cohort seemed to have chosen Montessori in part for who it would enable them to be and become. As one beginner proposed to her peers, the goal of MONT preparation was to “be who you are and be true to the Montessori system” [MONT-intro-061714]. When introducing themselves at the start of the summer session, many of the beginners appeared to view themselves as compatible with that system, especially when compared to traditional education. One beginner, for example, commented on her time in public schools by noting, “Something just did not feel right.” Other beginners discussed the mismatch in more ontological terms, as these two comments illustrated:

“I wasn’t happy and was losing myself as a person and as a teacher.”

“I lost myself as a person; lost myself as a teacher.”

Such comments revealed how some beginners at MONT seemed to feel that teaching involved a personal investment of “myself.” In fact, one beginner went so far as to claim that entering Montessori “was a healing experience” for her as a teacher.
A few beginners without teaching experience described entering MONT less as finding one’s self than as a sense of being called to Montessori. For example, one beginner remarked, “I really didn’t seek out Montessori; it sought me out.” Another beginner, a career-switcher who had worked as an accountant, described a visit to a Montessori classroom by stating, “I instantly fell in love with it… it’s been tugging at me…” As noted earlier with Jeff, such stories of the personal “fit” of Montessori and the emotional experience of finding one’s self or falling in love with it seemed to indicate an *a priori* orientation to the program’s educational values.

Further elaboration of these entry stories from interviews revealed notable differences in the perceived fit. For Mike, the sense of fit was in the tools he encountered in Montessori classrooms. He recalled being struck by the brilliance in the tracing tools used to teaching writing. “It was just this profound sense of providence almost in the way they were designed”, he explained, “and … I think that's what kind of got the hook in me was the materials” [Mike-int1-06:51].

For Alex, the sense of fit was with the professional norms she encountered. After visiting a friend’s classroom she said she was “sold pretty much” [Alex-int1-04:40]. When asked what sold her she replied, “Honestly, the feel in the classroom, it was just comfortable and relaxed” [Alex-int1-05:05]. By comparison, in the traditional pre-school where she used to work, Alex felt that she was being unfairly judged for how well she followed the rules and presented herself. For her, Montessori felt more “natural and accepting,” a place where she didn’t feel she had to “walk in and stand up straight and follow all these rules” [Alex-int1-00:06:53]. Significantly, the MONT program felt good because it did not require her to compromise her “self.” Looking back at the summer session and describing that feeling she remarked, “I didn’t have to be somebody who I was not” [Alex-int1-16:51].

Chapter 5
For Carol it was seeing the philosophy in action. After her first visit to a Montessori classroom she felt that “[i]t just kind of clicked” and “was meant to be” [Carol-int1-02:21]. She went on to recall reading Maria Montessori’s texts thinking they were “eye opening” and awe inspiring [Carol-int1-13:23]. The logic of the method, which Carol observed first hand in a Montessori classroom, resonated with her, too. As she stated,

It makes sense why these things are happening and why [Montessori’s] curriculum is structured that way, and I just thought that I kind of believed or thought that that’s how we should learn. So, it fueled my interest to go and become a Montessori teacher rather than just sitting in a desk and listening to the teacher, which I’ve done my whole life.

[Carol-int1-13:23]

Carol referenced her own experience as a student, which she considered unappealing compared to a Montessori experience. Indeed, while reading about the method she found herself wondering, “[i]f I was in a Montessori classroom, like how that would have been for me?”

Whether hooked, sold, or feeling a “click” of compatibility, such stories of entering MONT suggested that some the beginners arrived at the summer session with imaginations for what Montessori teaching could offer them. They thus seemed primed to fulfill the ontological object of transforming into a Montessori teacher.

**Becoming a child-centered teacher.** Over the summer there were indications that some of the beginners desired to be teachers capable of really attending to children. For example, one morning before the courses started they shared how the poem “Red Brocade”, by Naomi Shihab Nye, piqued their desire to be a different kind of person than society demanded [MONT-intro-072814]. One line in the poem about “not being claimed” seemed to move several individuals. Justine noted how she saw herself as different than her friends and said, “I refuse to be claimed
by a social norm.” Another beginner then admitted, “I really crave this… the knowledge that people are more important than the things you want to accomplish.” She then recalled a related quote about the sun doing so many things yet still having time to ripen grapes as if it had nothing better to do. “That’s the kind of teacher I want to be,” she proclaimed, explaining that as this kind of teacher she could “be with a child who needed me as if I had nothing else to be doing.” Such comments indicated a heartfelt investment in transforming into a “kind of teacher” in line with the program’s ontological object.

During the second round of interviews, conducted as the MONT beginners started their residency, a few of the beginners talked about their teaching experiences in ways that indicated that the program’s ontological ideal of being child-centered was being put to the test. This was especially true for the beginners with prior training and experience in traditional public education, and even more so for those doing their residency in Montessori charters. As these beginners discussed their teaching experiences, it seemed that they found it difficult to shed the ways of being a teacher they had taken on in the past within traditional, teacher-led classrooms.

As noted earlier in the chapter, David was serving as a lead teacher in a charter Montessori school. A few months into the residency year, he mentioned having a tough time normalizing his students to the Montessori routine. David said that this challenge surprised him because he had expected Montessori teaching to prove easier than what he had experienced in traditional classrooms. He mentioned having to make peace with feeling “so defeated” in ways that made him feel like it was his “first year all over again” [David-int2-00:01]. Focusing students on materials required him to bounce around the room to individual children and small groups to get them inspired and on task, which made him “feel like the energizer bunny” [David-
int2-05:51]. He worried that students were taking advantage of his constant movement to misbehave when he wasn’t looking.

Part of the challenge, he explained, was that he couldn’t rely on familiar practices from his years in traditional classrooms. For example, he could no longer use “traditional systems” of rewards and punishments like the “stop light” colors (green, yellow, red) to indicate escalating misbehavior. With certain students this had him wondering, “Well, if I can’t change your color, and I’m really not gonna take away recess, what is the punishment? What will deter you…” [David-int2-27:38]? Under pressure and feeling stressed, familiar traditional practices became appealing. In fact, David found it reassuring and even pleasurable to do whole group activities, a practice he once despised. As he explained,

I feel more comfortable in a whole group now. Which is so funny, ‘cause that’s what I complained about the most. … I think [it’s] the thing that I’m the best at, is doing the morning meeting or calendar and all that. So I love it, we sing, we dance, and then that’s when I feel the most comfortable, because everybody’s in my line of vision. [David-int2-04:04]

To really transform into a Montessori teacher he would have to become comfortable with students not always being in his line of vision. Also, he seemed to recognize that his need to be the center of attention was problematic. But he felt at his “best” in such whole group moments, which made it difficult for him to step out of the instructional limelight and really embrace Montessori’s ontological ideal.

Alex was serving as an assistant and not a lead, but she also described a tension between wanting to implement Montessori’s student-centered practices and feeling a need to use familiar traditional practices. She noted how Montessori teachers were expected to be quiet and she was
more vocal, the kind of teacher who tended to “interrupt kids all the time” instead of letting them work [Alex-int1-26:22]. Seeing what was expected of her she had to wonder, “Is my personality gonna fit with this method?” Indeed, recalling Nancy’s comment about the tapes of adult-child interaction that everyone had in their head, Alex admitted, “It’s hard to erase those tapes and play new ones” [Alex-int2-17:44]. As an example she described a challenging day where the classroom routine was disrupted and the students were wild. She wanted to be harsh and struggled to restrain her conditioned impulse. She explained how balancing “traditional discipline” and “the Montessori way” proved difficult because she didn’t feel like she had enough “tricks of the trade” yet to address misbehavior [Alex-int2-01:58]. She mentioned wanting to learn those tricks so she could be “a little more fun” and let her “personality show a little bit more” [Alex-int2-21:31]. She liked being a “goofy” teacher and said, “I don’t want [my teaching] to come across like it’s just strictly business” [Alex-int2-22:22].

Alex noted that a challenge of being a Montessorian was learning to let go of a desire for students to always do exactly as one expected. In her view, such an approach was “more teacher-driven” [Alex-int2-02:53]. To disrupt this tendency she was trying to “put it back on [the students]” so they would see how their behaviors were impacting the classroom community, not just the teacher. This honored and cultivated a classroom-wide desire for good behavior. Though worthwhile, she was finding this difficult to do and felt like a “bad person” for wanting to punitively discipline students or create external motivators to compel them to behave and get their work done [Alex-int2-03:33].

Like David, Alex felt a little guilty about how much she enjoyed being the center of attention in the classroom. When asked what she enjoyed about teaching in her residency classroom, she replied, “I love giving lessons. I really do” [Alex-int2-32:08]. She thought this
was because it was the “part where you’re teaching” and “you’re in it because you want the children to learn and that’s the moment that you’re doing it” [Alex-int2-32:21]. Alex admitted that such moments were “teacher driven” but she found it rewarding to present a lesson and then see the children using the lesson materials on their own the next day. Even if the child’s interest was more a result of the material than her teaching, it was “a good feeling” [Alex-int2-32:46]. Alex thus echoed David’s sense of pleasure over the “teacher driven” aspects of instruction, which made those aspects difficult to divest. Despite the challenge of transformation, neither Alex nor David gave me the impression that they didn’t desire it, and their hearts seemed invested in the program’s ontological object even if it was hard to embody all the time.

Such a heartfelt investment was less visible with Kate, who seemed to be struggling the most with teaching as the residency year got underway. When we talked in late September, the misbehavior of her students was getting so bad that she was contemplating quitting teaching altogether. Kate was initially enthused about Montessori teaching. Prior to MONT she served in schools with confrontational administrators who offered little support or encouragement. In the Montessori charter she noticed a refreshing difference in the “polite” and “independent” students [Kate-int1-25:21]. Commenting on the Montessori method she noted, “It also sort of works well with my style of teaching, the way I prefer to teach.” In many ways it seemed to tap into a standing desire for the child-centered, developmental approach she had once used as a reading interventionist. She considered herself “introverted” and thought “that maybe Montessori is better for an introverted teacher” [Kate-int1-27:22].

Compared with her previous position teaching in a traditional classroom, Kate mentioned feeling that the Montessori method afforded her more strategies for managing behavior. Even so, those strategies weren’t working for her. In part she blamed the position and the fact that “there's
always a million and one things going on” in her school [Kate-int2-07:24]. But regardless, her students still had not normalized to the Montessori expectation for self-regulated behavior. This seemed evident during my visit to her classroom in late September, where I watched as she spent the entire time I was there (60 minutes) having students practice going to the bathroom and walking quietly in the halls. Stressed by her difficulties with classroom management, she explained that an ultimatum had formed in her mind, and she was “looking forward to either [student normalization to the routines] or moving on to something else” [Kate-int2-10:09]. She then admitted,

I had my reservations going into this and I still have them, but I signed up for it and I have to do my best for the kids and for my self… [Kate-int2-10:31]

As she talked, I got the impression that Kate’s “self” was in a vulnerable state. Though she considered it “crazy” to already be dreaming of leaving her position, she could see the appeal of getting her Masters of education and working in special education. Recalling her brief time as a reading interventionist, she noted

I really enjoyed that kind of work because it was less about the classroom management side of things and just more about helping kids progress. And I feel like it was also more of a… problem-solving approach rather than, “I have to create these lessons and these materials, and I have to figure out how to draw everybody in.” [Kate-int2-11:26]

She viewed herself as an “analytical person,” which was why she thought that leading a classroom didn’t come “easily” to her. Then she stated, “I don't know if I'm just not used to this and so it feels that way.” It was still early in the year and she seemed to be wondering if maybe “that way” she felt would change if she gave Montessori teaching more time. But at that moment
it appeared that her heartfelt investment in becoming the kind of Montessori teacher framed by
the instructors over the summer was waning.

To summarize, during the summer session nine MONT beginners—including focal
beginners Mike, Alex, and Carol—expressed comments about the personal “fit” of Montessori.
This suggested that such beginners started the program primed to fulfill MONT’s ontological
object and transform into Montessori teachers—individuals capable of focusing attention on
children. Like their instructors, these beginners talked about finding their way to Montessori as
refuge or were attracted by its philosophy. Once summer gave way to the fall residency, three of
seven focal beginners—David, Alex, and Kate—were encountering issues with letting go of
familiar ways of being a teacher learned while teaching in more “traditional” classroom settings.
However, of the beginners I interviewed, only Kate seemed to be losing a heartfelt commitment
to become a Montessori teacher, which seemed to reflect her diminishing investment in
becoming a teacher more generally.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have worked to tease out the orienting narratives offered by MONT
program leaders that directed beginning teachers toward a few of the program’s objects. First,
there appeared to be a generalized object of teaching that reflected Maria Montessori’s “cosmic
vision” of a peaceful society, a vision requiring teachers to have a holistic and positive image of
children. The instructors also conveyed a sense that investing one’s heart in the program’s ideals
required a desire to inspire students to be self-directed, joyful learners (pedagogical object). I
also noted that academic success was an object less commonly discussed by the instructor but
also something they desired of instruction. As framed by the instructors, becoming a Montessori
teacher also entailed a commitment to transforming into the kind of person who could selflessly

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focus attention on children (ontological object). The instructors seemed to convey that such transformation, however, might be more about permitting one’s best self to emerge.

Generally, it appeared that MONT beginners desired to fulfill the identified generalized object of teaching and pedagogical object, and with one exception they seemed to desire to fulfill the ontological object as well. As I have shown, nine of the twenty-five MONT beginners in the observed cohort exhibited a heartfelt investment in the generalized object as they discussed its potential and desire to spread it. Likewise, the efforts of David and Carol to practice the Montessori method and the pleasure Mike, Tara, David, and one other MONT peer expressed about teaching it suggested a desire for the pedagogical object. Finally, nine of the MONT beginners seemed to find the Montessori way of being attractive when compared to other way of being a teacher, though making the transformation and shedding older but more familiar ways of being proved challenging for beginners such as David, Alex and Kate with experience teaching in traditional classroom environments.

1 The talk can be accessed at http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms
2 This odd coincidence came to light in my first interview with David. I had chosen him as a focal beginner because I wanted the perspective a person of color and of a teacher serving in a charter school in the large urban district that partnered with CTP. He offered a helpful check on my interpretations of CTP and further insights into the program. Fearing that he might worry about his involvement in my study if he every figured out the coincidence, I felt compelled to tell him that my other research site was CTP. This allowed what I considered to be more frank conversation between us and provided him with opportunities to tell me when he preferred I not quote certain comments in anything published from the study.
3 Cossentino (2006) observes that one of Maria Montessori’s major contributions to progressive education movement was dissolving the firm boundary between work and play. But this sets her apart from other progressivists who see child-directed play as different from the didactic materials and scripted lessons of the Montessori method. Cossentino notes, though, that Montessori’s critics too often fail to appreciate how her emphasis on work was motivated by her ideals for society and the necessity of finding pleasure in the tasks that help realize them. As Cossentino explains, “The progressive effects of joyful work, freely chosen, are meant to lead to a particular vision of ‘goodness.’ And that vision not only links virtue to concentration, discipline, and order but also links human development to social progress (p. 69).”
4 An acronym for First, Outer, Inner, Last (FOIL) that is used to remind students how to proceed with multiplying two binomials.
5 The full list of qualities to avoid: “Joy and love are absent; Classes by grade level; Work plans created by teacher; Teacher teaching-student listening; Use of praise, rewards, bribes; Cultural activities limited to one to two a week; Students display little responsibility; Constant interruptions to work time; Lots of worksheets; Use of threats,
humiliation, and punishment; Lots of spelling groups, reading groups, with traditional teaching; All children treated the same; Remedial programs used for everyone; Competition is encouraged; Students don’t maintain or have an investment in their environment; Emotional and social development ignored; Students have little freedom” [MONT-philo-071114].
6 The poem is publicly accessible online at http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/red-brocade
Chapter 6: Imagining Leaving Teaching

In the previous two chapters I explored how a beginner’s desire to become a teacher within a given preparation program seemed to require a heart invested in particular purposes, instructional practices, and ways of being a teacher. In line with my third research question, I also touched on the possibility of multiple objects of desire and how some beginners seemed to have competing desires. For example, some CTP beginners mentioned that they wanted to provide focused, rigorous instruction but that they also wanted to have fun. Likewise, some MONT beginners said that they wanted to be more child-centered but that they also wanted to be the center of attention at times during instruction. The consequences of such tensions were not entirely clear, though there was some indication that beginning teachers from both programs were experiencing internal conflicts that had them already pondering the possibility of leaving teaching.

For example, I noted two beginners who appeared to be struggling to imagine themselves as teachers within the system of desired objects presented by their respective programs. Ryan at CTP discussed a perceived mismatch between his way of being—more laid back and thoughtful—and that of his mentor teacher—“more of a leader” and “more of a perfectionist” [Ryan-int-32:47]—and he offered this mismatch as a big reason for why he hadn’t succeeded in the program and had to leave. For Kate at MONT, the demands of managing students as a lead teacher in a charter Montessori classroom had her wondering if her “analytical” way of being was really suited for teaching, even with a method that she saw value in [Kate-int2-11:26]. Taken together, Ryan and Kate’s comments suggested that stress and difficulty of learning teaching could lead beginners to imagine leaving the classroom. But as a counterpoint, neither Mark nor Ben discussed the possibility of leaving teaching despite their instructional struggles.
and threats of expulsion from CTP. In fact, Mark remained fairly steadfast in his desire to become a teacher even as the program sent him signals that he might be a poor fit for teaching. And when I asked Ben if he would stick with teaching if he were counseled out of the program he responded, “I still would. This is what I like to do, and this is what I’m good at” [Ben-int2-37:26]. The presence of difficulty and struggle were thus not always clear indicators of a heart losing interest in teaching. Actually, as I reveal in this chapter, the beginners who seemed to be imagining leaving teaching were often those who were largely meeting their program’s expectations. They would talk of liking teaching, but then express desires to do more and be more than they thought teaching could afford them. I see this raising an important question regarding the role of teacher preparation in cultivating not only instructional competence and professional dispositions but also a lasting commitment in teaching.

The beginners’ comments, though mostly brief sketches of possible futures that might never come to pass, provide insights into what their hearts seemed invested in and what they desired of themselves and their work in education. I view these “sketches” as the beginnings of what could be thought of as stories to leave by (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009), which Cheryl Craig (2014) defines as beginning teachers’ “narratives of abandoning their places of employment and/or the teaching profession” (p. 84). Craig contends that we can learn much from such narratives, a point she illustrates by recounting the story of a promising beginning teacher named Anna Dean (pseudonym) who left teaching after a few frustrating years in an urban public school. Craig concludes that it is often quite difficult for beginners like Anna to cultivate a satisfying story of teaching within the current climate of shifting curricular priorities and revolving-door leadership. Anna also felt unsupported as a beginner, something other beginners cite as a major reason for leaving teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).
As I have conceptualized it, desire may contribute to our understanding of why teachers leave by inviting consideration of the imagination and its role in orienting the heart toward particular futures beyond the classroom. Indeed, the comments I encountered in the interviews of beginning teachers suggest that reasons for leaving teaching may be taking shape during preparation as beginners ponder their limited classroom experiences and consider them in light of what they desire of the work and their careers. To make sense of this terrain I find it useful to employ Schroeder’s (2015) distinction between standing desires that seem present in the mind but latent and occurrent desires that appear to preoccupy a person’s mind and be driving their actions. In my analysis it appeared that for some beginners the prospect of leaving teaching was barely on their minds in part because they did not indicate that they had any standing or occurrent desires that might be competing with a desire to teach. Others conveyed a more palpable sense that they had standing desires for things that could eventually cause them to leave the classroom, such as wanting to be a leader or wanting to make a bigger difference for underserved students in ways other than teaching. In some cases a desire to make a difference or take on another role in education came across as almost occurrent as beginners seemed preoccupied with them and appeared to be giving the prospect of leaving the classroom a lot of thought.

In what follows I present examples of each possibility. Then I shed some light on how desire might enrich our understanding of beginners’ stories to leave by through a discussion of comments David made during interviews on his being initially trained at CTP and why he left traditional public teaching to pursue Montessori teaching at MONT.
Evidence of standing desires that could result in leaving teaching

Some evidence of standing desires

Three beginners indicated that they might have some desire for things that might one day cause them to leave the classroom, though they didn’t offer much elaboration or convey a clear desire to leave through their comments. For example, when I asked Carol at MONT if she could see herself doing something other than teaching, she responded by saying that she “loved learning” and added,

My friends are doing all these classes in grad school at some college. I wish I could take those, but... I get to do it here: I get to learn and explore different subjects and ... I don’t know. I have no idea. [Carol-int2-03:53]

Though a relatively brief comment, Carol hinted that interactions with friends and the pleasure of learning could be nurturing some standing desire—a “wish”—that she could take graduate classes like those her friends were taking. But countering this desire was perhaps a sense that her program and residency experience were giving her fulfilling opportunities to learn. If she had a standing desire to learn that occupied her mind on occasion, it was thus being addressed, and she did not seem to want to leave teaching anytime soon to return to school.

Other beginners similarly indicated that they harbored possible standing desires that could lead them out of the classroom someday. Justine at MONT mentioned how one day she might want to become head of a Montessori school. The topic came up as she talked about her former public school students and how she felt that they deserved better schools. In response, I asked her if she had ever thought of running her own school, and she said that it could happen, but if so it would be “way down the road” in her professional career [Justine-int1-27:45]. Elizabeth at CTP likewise said that she could see doing something more than teaching but was
comfortable with the prospect of teaching for a while. She really cared for the underprivileged students she worked with and thought that she might “want to become more involved in the community” in a way that would further serve their needs [Elizabeth-int1-37:41]. When I asked if this would require quitting teaching she replied,

No. I mean maybe … if I felt that I could make more of a difference doing that eventually. But that’s not in my future goals right now. I’m really happy with where I’m heading and I’ll definitely be comfortable [teaching] for … at least the next ten years or I’m not sure. [Elizabeth-int1-37:53]

What appeared to be a standing desire to do more to serve underserved communities did not seem to challenge Elizabeth’s expressed comfort and happiness with her envisioned path forward as a teacher. As with Justine and Carol, whatever standing desire she might have for things that might take her out of the classroom, such desire remained latent and did not seem to be occupying her mind.

More convincing evidence of standing desires

Other beginners conveyed a sense that certain standing desires occupied their minds often enough that they were more certain of the possibility of leaving teaching. Tara, for example, seemed a little more invested in the idea of eventually running her own school and brought it up while talking about why she chose Montessori. She said that she had a role model in her mother, who had transitioned from teaching in a Montessori classroom to running a Montessori school. Tara said that she admired her mother’s passion and ability to move the school forward, and she imagined following in her mother’s footsteps. She then remarked, “I think that when I come to a certain age, I think I would wanna get out of the classroom” [Tara-int1-02:44]. Having just started teaching, however, she imagined staying in the classroom and said at one point, “I know
I’m gonna be in the classroom for a long time because I’m in love with it. I don’t see myself getting out of that environment any time soon” [Tara-int2-10:32]. So while it appeared that Tara’s mother afforded her imaginative material for envisioning a desirable image of herself as a leader, it was a distant vision and her desire came across as more standing than occurrent, with some likelihood of her leaving teaching.

Sarah similarly saw herself as the kind of person who would need to do something else other than teach at some point in her career. As she told me in our third interview,

I’ll be in education; I don’t doubt that. But I don’t think I’ll just be in a classroom forever. I think I’ll eventually get to the point—I’m not a very [pauses] you know, stay still. I’ll get my doctorate in a few years … I will. I know that for sure. I don’t know in what, but I will. Just because, what do you do? I can’t imagine doing the same thing for the next thirty years. I can imagine exactly what realm I want to be in. I’ve never felt so happy as I do about teaching. And I think I’ll probably retire a teacher. But I definitely think there will be an in-between where I’ll have to go out and be more than I’ve been for the last little while. That’s just sort of how I am. [Sarah-int3-29:04]

Sarah’s heart thus seemed to be invested in the professional domain of education, and she expressed fondness for being a teacher. But she could not “imagine” staying a teacher and viewed herself as the kind of person would need to “be more” than she had been. The inevitability of professional progress seemed obvious to her “[j]ust because, what do you do?” Though she might come back to teaching, she thus appeared to think of it as a relatively low status position that would not offer her enough from a professional standpoint. A standing desire to leave teaching was therefore a little stronger for Sarah than some of the other beginners given her view of herself as someone who would need to be sated by doing more than teaching.
Kelsey at CTP also revealed a standing desire to one day leave teaching for leadership. She pointed to past experiences, noting that often in her life she had been tapped to take on leadership roles. With confidence she told me, “I would definitely say I’m a leader and I think that’s something I aspire to be” [Kelsey-int3-21:30]. She admitted that it was a long-term goal and she still had a lot to learn as a teacher. Even so, she shared that it was something she was “obviously working towards” and she explained her desire for something more than classroom teaching by stating,

I want to be in some type of leadership role. I don’t foresee myself teaching for thirty-five years... As I think, “What’s my ultimate goal?” I don’t think it's being in a classroom for forty years. I think it’s progressing into something like more of a leadership type of role. [Kelsey-int3-22:24]

Perhaps more than just a goal, Kelsey’s standing desire to lead appeared to be rooted in her heartfelt investment in the idea of becoming a leader, which had her thinking of leading as a foregone conclusion. But there was more to it. As she remarked, “My eyes have really been opened this year to how many other things the district needs” [Kelsey-int3-24:28]. Such a comment suggested that the problems of education might be on her mind enough to be fueling a desire to “fix” them. If this desire continued to preoccupy her mind it could perhaps become an occurrent desire. Indeed, the way Kelsey talked of leaving teaching it seemed possible that a desire to make a difference, coupled with a standing desire to be a leader, could precipitate her exit from the classroom. She mused about the possibility of being an administrator one day but remained open to what the future might bring, concluding her comments by stating, “We’ll see where it goes” [Kelsey-int3-24:28].
Evidence of possible occurrent desires

There were three interviewed beginners who expressed in greater detail their desires to make a difference or to take on other roles in education. It thus seemed that such desires were preoccupying their minds in a way suggestive of an occurrent rather than a standing desire. For these beginners it appeared that leaving the classroom was a strong possibility. Kate at MONT, for example, shared with me how she was struggling as a lead teacher in her Montessori charter school. In the last chapter I mentioned how she was stressed by student misbehavior and was imagining herself going back to school to be a specialist in reading or special education. So while she wouldn’t necessarily be leaving teaching, she would be leaving the classroom as a teacher of record. Regardless, Kate’s desire for change, whether in the mood of the classroom or in her role in education, came across as occurrent—something preoccupying her mind.

Dawn and James at CTP both seemed preoccupied with wanting to make an impact in education beyond what they thought was possible through teaching. As with her peers at CTP, Dawn similarly expressed a desire to eventually leave teaching for leadership, though she seemed to have given it more thought than her peers. In our third interview, when I asked her what she thought it took to succeed at CTP, she answered by saying that she saw herself among an elite group—the CTP cohort—selected for their leadership potential. In talking with colleagues she had come to believe that the program picked people who had a common desire to make a difference. Speaking for that select group, she remarked, “We want to teach until we make a bigger impact somewhere else.” She went on to explain,

…at the end of the day I don’t know that a lot of us see our career for the next thirty years being classroom teachers. But we want to experience that and we want to help in a greater capacity. And going into the classroom first is kind of a route to get there … I
kind of knew coming into this that I want to teach because I want to have a greater
capacity later to influence education. And I kind of didn’t say that because I thought it
was taboo… [Dawn-int3-11:39]

It thus appeared that Dawn saw her desire to teach as part of a larger desire to make a difference,
and it was therefore inevitable that fulfilling that desire would require leaving the classroom. She
also appeared to think that such ambition, though well intended, was “taboo” to talk about in the
program, which suggested that CTP did not openly endorse or intentionally nurture an
expectation of departing the classroom for leadership. In fact, CTP program leaders seemed to be
stressing a conceptualization of leadership more akin to a vision of well-prepared, ambitious
teachers leading the way with the improvement of the their schools (Barth, 2007) rather than
leadership as advancement in professional status. But that conceptual distinction may have been
hazy for beginners like Dawn.¹

Indeed, as with Kelsey, Dawn saw the program as having played an important role in
cultivating what seemed to be an occurrent desire to do more than teach by opening her eyes to
the major issues in urban education. Speaking of herself again as part of a collective she
explained,

I don’t think it’s that we want to leave. But I think, and maybe CTP has helped instill
this, [teaching has] grown this greater awareness I feel like [of] entering into a greater
movement, like internal movement where… I’m aware of all these things now. And I’m
looking at not just my classroom but I’m looking at the school now and I’m wondering,
“Why isn’t the school functioning at a greater level? And why isn’t the district
functioning there? And what’s really going on?” [Dawn-int3-11:39]
She added that, having talked to CTP colleagues, it was clear that they also saw “classroom teaching [as] a route to something else” but they were “not sure what that looks like yet.” Despite the uncertainty of the future she viewed herself as a leader and felt that the program was cultivating her leadership potential—that it was “an expectation … that you do become a leader” [Dawn-int3-14:34]. She wasn’t sure if this was an explicit part of the program’s design, but she got the impression that CTP chose individuals who were “naturally inclined to be a leader and … always wondering, ‘What more can I do? What’s the greater steps?’” From her comments, Dawn seemed to identify less with a conceptualization of leadership as advancement in professional status, which she seemed to tie to her expressed desire to “do more” by “helping in a greater capacity” than teaching afforded. The compulsion to leave, as Dawn framed it, did not reflect a desire to leave the classroom so much as a desire to do more through a leadership position, such as by being a principal. It is also worth recalling from chapter four how Dawn had hit it off with her new principal, saying that she felt the principal “could be a great mentor” for her [Dawn-int3-07:24]. This image of leadership may have further established what seemed to be a standing desire to lead. And as with Kelsey, her indication of an occurrent desire to make a difference and take those next steps to make a bigger impact—a desire she mentioned bringing with her into the program—suggested that leaving the classroom was a possibility for Dawn.

James at CTP also appeared convinced that he was destined to do more than be a teacher even though he enjoyed teaching, and he shared more of his story than most of the other beginners. In our first interview I asked him about his experiences teaching solo for two weeks and he exclaimed,
I just loved having complete control of the classroom! And it was just one of those, like, “Yes, I belong here and this is what I was meant to be doing,” sort of things. [James-int1-39:51]

Such enthusiasm provided some indication that James had a heartfelt investment in teaching and at least some desire to become a teacher. And he offered many compelling reasons to believe that teaching was what he was “meant to be doing.” On multiple occasions he gushed about the quality of his mentor teacher and he saw her as supportive of his teaching career; she had even taken him to a garage sale where they picked up books and games from the classroom of a retiring teacher. Also, when I visited his classroom to observe him teach, I saw him laughing with students and looking like he as having fun with them. At one point during James’ math lesson a boy crossed-his eyes and looked up at his teacher with a straight face to ask a question. James burst out laughing, then moved to address the question before the silly moment could distract the other students. Later when I reminded him of this and other instances of playfulness I had observed he explained, “Those are moments that I live for, and I’m so grateful, so grateful that I’m here to experience those moments” [James-int3-34:27]. Such joy and thankfulness suggested that James had laid the imaginative groundwork for a pleasurable and rewarding career in the classroom.

But there was more to James’ professional quest, with several desires appearing to challenge his commitment to teaching. A self-identified black man, James often mentioned that he wanted to make a difference for boys of color in special education, and the theme of racial injustice was one he brought up throughout the year in interviews and in the weekly seminar in a way that suggested that it was an occurrent desire. During one seminar, for example, he explained to the cohort,
I have just enough of the vocabulary and just enough of the knowledge to know that I don’t know much. And it’s not just about teaching, too, it’s about… some of the problems that every school’s facing. Like why are black boys disproportionately… affected by schooling? I’ve started to get a lens for and see those systemic problems that every school in [CTP’s partner district] and a lot of schools in the United States… are facing. And realizing that in a lot of ways without that knowledge I’m powerless. [CTP-seminar-120513]

Indeed, a lack of power to make the kind of difference seemed to bother James. In our first interview he remarked, “I think that teachers do have a lot of power, but I feel like administrators and people in more political educational positions hold a lot more power” [James-int1-26:56]. James had actually experienced this relative lack of power at CTP when the program leadership denied his request to form a sub-group within the majority-white cohort for the program’s teachers of color. He had also been approached by a seminar instructor about toning down his rhetoric around racial injustice in the graduate courses. In the second interview he told me that these rebukes were on his mind, which further suggested that James had an occurrent desire to address racial injustice. That desire seemed to have him anticipating that he would do more than teach. As he explained to me in an interview,

I’m looking forward to being the best special education teacher in this program … and building a name for myself in [the district]. Because … I don’t want to just be a teacher. I am so frustrated by the systems that I want to go on and do amazing things. [James-int1-35:55]
He thus appeared pretty convinced that being “just a teacher” would be inadequate to address his frustration with special education even though he had found teaching pleasurable and saw it as something he should be doing.

Compounding this tension between staying in the classroom and leaving to do more was the programmatic expectation that CTP graduates commit to four years of teaching in the program’s partner district to receive remuneration for their Master’s degree. Indeed, in our third interview James mentioned that a major motivation for completing CTP and getting hired was to avoid having to pay back the loans. He said that interviewing for a teaching position had been so stressful that it gave him heartburn bad enough to prompt a doctor visit. As he explained the anxiety, “I just felt like there was a lot riding on getting this job” [James-int3-24:20]. But despite the relief over getting hired, later in the interview he admitted, “I love teaching but … I’m not sure I’m even going to finish my four years to get my money back” [James-int3-38:23]. Before making this comment he had reiterated his desire to draw attention to the issues faced by students of color. I then commented on how it seemed that this issue was a “personal mission” for him, to which he responded, “Yah, and I’m thinking more and more lately that I’m not going to teach for very long.” This was a shift from his comment earlier in the year that teaching was what he was “meant to do.” He explained that over the year his thinking had changed, and he wanted to go back to school and perhaps become a lawyer.

It seemed that James’ experiences in CTP and a special education classroom were further fueling his occurrent desire to affect change by also awakening standing desires for certain work environments and professional status. Regarding work environments, he did not consider CTP to be “actual school” due to its heavy emphasis on collaboration and reflection. He explained that his “personality” was not suited for the kind of “happy, lovey, collaborative” work in the weekly
seminar, the graduate courses, and in Fieldstone Elementary. Furthermore, James mentioned how he was coming to see himself as less suited for a life spent working with children. For example, he said that he did not like hugging and was not a “toucher” [James-int3-26:56]. Teaching had even shifted his imagination of domestic life; he said that he no longer wanted to be a foster parent who adopted several underprivileged children with a partner. He appeared to long for a more scholarly environment by commenting,

If I could have lectures every day ( sighs), I would love that. Or if I could write academically all the time, that’d be really great, too … If I could spend my time alone … in the basement of the library working on whatever: that to me sounds really, really, really nice. And do that sort of problem-solving work that someone in law would have to do. [James-int3-38:23]

It thus seemed that a standing desire from his college experience for the relative quiet and tasks of an academic environment had been stirring in his imagination.

As for a standing desire for professional status, James told me that he was young and he saw his friends progressing in law and medical school and said, “I feel like I still have so many options… I could do anything still!” He said that law school was appealing as a way to make a bigger impact. He said that his time at CTP had helped him to realize that “being around kids was really enjoyable,” but he felt that policies would need to change if special education teaching was to improve. He considered his classroom teaching experiences as useful for developing “a basic understanding of SPED law” to aid him in an academic or law career.

In talking of leaving teaching James gave the impression that he shared a desire for what I proposed was CTP’s generalized object of teaching—to serve students in underserved communities. But he kept expanding on that object, playing out scenarios and folding in various

Chapter 6
aspects of himself, his history, and his experiences in the classroom to reveal how several other objects of desire occupied his thoughts. It thus appeared that, as the program year commenced, standing desires for comfort, status, and making an impact were taking precedence over whatever desire he had to be a teacher. It therefore seemed that James could eventually leave teaching.

As I have shown, the seeds of eventual stories to leave by were present in several of the comments provided by beginning teachers in both CTP and MONT. Some beginners, such as James and Dawn, offered more compelling evidence that they could leave by elaborating on their standing desires for leadership, power, and to make a bigger difference in education. Other beginners, like Sarah and Kelsey, seemed to have a standing desire to one day be a building leader, and they could thus imagine themselves leaving teaching. But they didn’t seem to have given it as much thought as James and Dawn and appeared less sure of where a standing desire for leadership would take them. Finally, beginners such as Carol, Justine, and Elizabeth seemed to have given the matter of leaving teaching less thought even though they indicated the possibility of standing desires to lead or, in Carol’s case, to go back to school. With all of the beginners thus mentioned, the inklings of a standing desire called to mind the image of a small dormant seed that could germinate into an occurrent desire under the right conditions. I do want to acknowledge the possibility that such germination could have occurred for any of the beginners I followed in the study but, because I was not actively looking for stories to leave by through my observation and interview protocols, I failed to capture more than what I have presented in this section.
David on why he left traditional public school teaching for Montessori

As noted in the fifth chapter, several instructors and beginning teachers at MONT sought Montessori for the desirable vision, method, and way of being a teacher that they felt it offered them. Many of them mentioned their frustration with traditional teaching. In fact, during the summer session, one MONT beginner exclaimed to her program peers that in public schools there “just seems like there’s more pressure than ever before.” Building on that comment her instructor said,

There is more pressure and it’s driving teachers out of the profession. It’s driving the best teachers out of the profession, because they know … what’s good for kids. [MONT-math-061814]

Though driven out of teaching in traditional public school classrooms, many of the MONT beginners were not driven out of the profession entirely but instead made a lateral move into Montessori teaching.

This was the case with David, who explained to me how his path to MONT began several years prior with his initial teacher training at CTP, followed by several years of teaching elementary grades in traditional classrooms in the program’s partner school district. At the time of our first interview, he had been hired to be a lead teacher within a brand new Montessori charter school in the same district, and by the second interview he had been working in that school for several weeks. Generally, he considered the ills of public education as part of what he called a “systemic issue” in which testing and a sense of urgency left teachers too little time to do their jobs effectively [David-int1-06:19]. A self-identified Latino man, David had told his peers during the MONT summer session that he worried that students of color, and especially Latino children, were being poorly served in traditional schools. In an interview he shared his hope that
an education could be better for Latino students just as it had been for him. He gave a lot of credit to his elementary teachers for helping him in ways his family could not. “I was one of those children,” he told me. “My mom never read books to me. Yet, here I am, a reading teacher” [David-int1-13:08]. But he worried that traditional education might be causing more harm than good for Latino students. As he remarked, “I mean it’s interesting, and then you start thinking about, from a sociological perspective, could it be that [school] is a systemic way of oppressing people” [David-int1-21:41]? He thus seemed to be pondering the tensions of schooling—what it could provide but the costs incurred—for Latino students. As such, his desire to improve students’ educational experiences came across as occurrent rather than standing—something that, as with James, was on his mind and drove him as a professional.

David was clear with me that despite his frustrations with traditional teaching he was thankful for his training at CTP and felt that it had offered him a great start in teaching. He explained that the program’s pace and rigor had pushed him and the CTP instructors had given him many useful instructional tools. But he felt that his training had also given him a false sense of confidence about his abilities. Not long into his first year as a full classroom teacher he said that he appeared competent to others but still felt inadequate. As he explained,

I came out of [CTP] feeling just... like I could do it. But then when I was in my first year of teaching, it was just so... unbelievably hard. But I’ll never forget other teachers saying to my grade level teammate and I … “You guys don’t even look like first year teachers.” But I didn’t feel that way. I felt so novice, I felt like I wasn’t doing everything CTP told me; I wasn’t implementing all the best practices, because at that time, I hadn’t internalized that it takes time. [David-int1-01:48]
With experience, it appeared that David felt that he had gained a better understanding of how ambition was a poor substitute for patience. He mentioned trying to pass on this wisdom to recent CTP graduates who seemed eager to implement every practice they had learned. “Yes, this is all great,” he would tell them, “but it takes time to get there.”

He noted that such wisdom contradicted the sense of urgency that CTP instilled in its beginning teachers. Looking back at his CTP training, he remembered being made to feel that classroom time was too precious to waste. As he told me,

[CTP program leaders] were always saying, “This is what you have to do, these kids are so behind. You have to make one-and-a-half years growth.” I will never forget that. There is no time for play … I remember we even had a lesson on, “What is the difference between activities and learning experiences?” So, no activities, no parties, no fun…

[David-int1-11:41]

His concern over not having time for fun brought to mind similar comments made by CTP beginners. David also mentioned how he was “constantly worrying about the achievement gap” while in the program [David-int1-29:35]. The call-to-arms he remembers frequently hearing was, we need to make growth fast, fast! One-and-a-half years; you’ve gotta get them on grade level. This is what you’re gonna do. You gotta get them on grade level. [David-int1-29:35]

Such a sense of urgency to make an immediate impact in student achievement conveyed to him a sense of “panic” that he carried with him into his first year of teaching. The result, he noted, was a heavy workload fueled by the sense of urgency that left him with little time to really address the quality of his teaching. He remembered feeling stressed over the demands that he administer standardized tests and use data to drive his instruction. And he could see how his
struggles “always went back to time” and how much of it was spent on testing and data analysis.

As he described the intensity and anxiety he felt in his former situation,

Well, we first test the kids, right? So my kindergarteners were having to do a formative assessment, the interim assessments, the final end of year assessments. And what I ended up finding was, I would be out of a classroom for at least three days straight just testing them … after I test, I need to analyze my data … create my action plan, then implement my action plan, submit my action plan. Just that piece of the action planning took a lot of time, on top of the everyday business of a classroom. So, making the homework, grading the homework, being present with the kids, preparing my materials, preparing my lessons, making sure it's interactive, making sure it’s fun, making sure I’m differentiating, and then trying to get home at a decent time and having a life. [David-int1-07:09]

He added faculty meetings, “putting out fires,” and impromptu meetings with administrators to the list of demands cutting into his planning time within the traditional public school setting [David-int1-08:11].

The way David described his experience in traditional education made it sound as though, by having to constantly work to meet the many institutional and bureaucratic demands, he felt unable to adequately fulfill his desire to make a difference in the lives of his Latino students.

Frustrated, David eventually left the public school where he was teaching. It angered him to do so because it disrupted his vision of becoming a teacher fully embedded in a struggling community. As he explained,

My dream was to be that teacher in the school who teaches families after families. I teach siblings of my past students, and I’m just the veteran teacher at that school. That’s what
my dream was. But I’m seeing that that’s not gonna happen in a traditional school. And it breaks my heart. Having to leave the school that I was at, I was at the most highly impacted elementary school in [the district]. That’s who I wanted to serve. But I had to leave, because … things don’t run the way I think they should… [David-int1-13:59]

In his estimation it thus seemed that a good teacher was someone who accomplished more than raising test scores; it was a person who was committed to a community and sustained a capacity to serve them over generations. The heart he had invested in the community of his formal school was broken. But it seemed as though his desires to make a difference and realize his vision of a good teacher remained strong even though they would have to be fulfilled within a different school.

Generally, David seemed to like the work environment of the Montessori charter school better than the environment of his former traditional school. He was pleased by how his head-of-school acknowledged the achievement gap but also saw the importance of giving teachers time to work with the children and grow instructionally. He liked her mantra that teachers should proceed with a sense of “urgency without panic” [David-int1-10:47]. Like most schools in the district, David’s new school valued achievement and aimed to get all students to college, though he said that there was a sense of calm in the building that he appeared to find refreshing. Indeed, as discussed in the fifth chapter, David saw a depth to the Montessori philosophy, which he felt had opened up new channels of thought about what it meant to educate children. He said that he still had a steadfast view that all children should go to college, though he could see how the process of getting them there made a difference. As he stated,

I actually don’t wanna diminish that goal [of college]. I think it’s a fantastic goal and I don’t like when folks sort of jettison it, and say, “Oh, well it’s never gonna happen.” But
then I often think, “Is it enough to sort of create all this strict marching through testing and all that just to get them to the college door?” And I think yeah, but the kid that goes to Montessori or Waldorf, they’re gonna get to the college door, and they’re gonna do it a lot differently. [David-int1-22:42]

David went on to note how Montessori nurtured a passion for learning and ways of being that would help students in college and beyond. Indeed, rather than supplanting the generalized object of teaching that he had pursued at CTP—to serve students in underserved communities—the Montessori approach seemed to provide him with less obstacles for fulfilling a desire for that object. He noted that the pedagogical focus on raising achievement still remained at his charter school, but they used a method that reduced the sense of panic, which seemed to have him feeling like he could actually fulfill his desire to improve Latino students’ educational experiences and opportunities to go to college.

David’s was only one view of so-called traditional teaching and CTP. Even so, his comments corroborated some of what I observed at CTP and what beginners said of their experiences. The high level of stress he mentioned echoed the CTP beginners, as was the enthusiasm to get in to classrooms and make a difference. Also, a frustration with standardized testing and data-driven instruction was something that he shared with a few CTP beginners.

Finally, David’s perspective put into sharp focus the different conceptions of time within the two preparation programs and why CTP seemed to be fast paced. On the one hand the pace reflected the fact that the program lasted a year and had a lot of ground to cover. But on the other hand, it was arguably driven by a sense of urgency surrounding the achievement gap. The gap persisted and needed to be closed sooner rather than later for the sake of the children. From there it followed that part of closing that gap was, as David put it, “making growth fast” so students
stayed on trajectories to meet grade-level benchmarks. This required teachers to get up to speed fast in terms of instruction. By comparison, MONT conveyed a sense to its beginners that good teaching might take them a while to achieve, years even. Patience, it would seem, was a luxury that CTP and the traditional public school environment did not grant its teachers. An occurrent desire to raise achievement and close the gap was to subsume all other desires or force them back into a standing position—as present but ultimately latent. For David, who worried that such a focus on achievement might be inhibiting his desire to teach in ways that resonated with his vision of social justice, this was frustrating.

**Chapter conclusion**

These comments regarding the possibility of leaving teaching, though brief, nonetheless revealed how some beginners in both programs may have had standing desires for things that they weren’t sure could be fulfilled through teaching. This in turn had them already harboring thoughts of leaving teaching even though they hadn’t completed their preparation or induction. Such comments helpfully illustrated how the beginning teachers in the study might be doing more than appropriating tools and knowledge while preparing to be teachers. They were also playing out stories of their futures, imagining what it would mean to be a teacher with standing desires to reach professional mileposts or contribute to fixing what they perceived as a broken system of public education.

To some degree it seemed that CTP, more than MONT, was establishing the conditions within which an eventual *story to leave by* might take root. For CTP beginners like Dawn and James, for example, seeing educational inequity and a struggling system through their residency experiences seemed to fan an occurrent desire to make a difference that burned so bright that they could not imagine how to fulfill it within the classroom. They could thus anticipate the
likelihood of a standing desire to lead or gain professional status commanding more of their attention and being fulfilled in the service of that occurrent desire. The suggestion by Dawn that leadership was a valued ideal at CTP could have been reinforcing such a desire, especially if interpreted as an expectation to assume leadership roles outside the classroom. David, who was in a unique position to comment on both CTP and MONT, offered further insights into what might drive a beginner prepared at CTP to eventually leave teaching or at least seek out other avenues for teaching. He suggested that the heavy emphasis on data-driven instruction and standardized testing could conflict with a teacher’s desire to serve underserved students. The fast pace of the program and what he referred to as a pervasive sense of “urgency with panic” was echoed in the school where he taught after graduating from CTP. This suggested to him that the problem was larger than the program—something “systemic” in traditional public schooling in urban settings. Though MONT did not emphasize serving underserved students to the extent visible at CTP, David’s change to the Montessori system appeared to alleviate some of his concerns and, in his estimation, to put him in a better position to pursue his desire to provide a quality education for Latino students.

1 Such differences in how leadership is conceptualized by teacher preparation programs and how it might affect the imaginations and desires of beginning teachers is the theme of a paper I recently presented at AERA in Chicago (“Unpacking pre-service teachers’ expectations to eventually leave teaching: The allure of leadership”). In it I highlight how many teacher preparation programs from Stanford University to Evergreen State College include “leadership” as a stated mission of preparation. I then discuss three possible ways of conceptualizing leadership during preparation: 1) as a formal role such as principal, team coordinator, or policy-maker signifying an increase in relative status and power; 2) as envisioning teaching as leadership by stressing management techniques and practices typically from the business literature (cf., Farr, 2010; Treslan, 2006); 3) as leading the way with implementing desired reforms and having an influence on school improvement (cf., Barth, 2007). Based on some of the analysis done for this chapter, I am not convinced that the second two conceptualizations can exist independent of the first in a climate dominated by a social imaginary that reifies power and status.
Chapter 7: Discussion

In this study I set out to better understand the concept of desire and how particular ideals and visions of teaching emerge as desirable during teacher preparation. I proposed that reformers of teacher preparation helpfully draw attention to important aspects of learning teaching. Generally missing, however, is acknowledgement of the desires and heartfelt attachments that undergird teaching and the drive to improve classroom instruction through better quality teacher preparation. Indeed, I made the case that researchers, policy-makers, and teacher educators will likely struggle to arrive at a shared language of teaching and achieve consensus over the practices and aims of teacher preparation in part because of differences not only in the contours of envisioned ideals but also in their relative desirability. For example, in the first chapter I suggested that current reforms in teacher preparation frame a professional ideal that stresses the importance of core instructional practices, clearly delineated dispositions for teaching, and well-defined standards for performance. I noted how these reforms could be understood as directing teachers’ attention to what they should desire of their work, and I provided some criticism to highlight the shortcomings of the professional ideal and the possibility of other desires. But to really illustrate the differences in possible desires I have offered the orienting narratives and desired objects at City Teacher Prep (CTP) and the Montessori teacher training program (MONT) for comparison, and I have taken seriously differences in the heartfelt investments and desires expressed by the beginning teachers within each program.

To inform my inquiry into desire I developed thorough theoretical/conceptual and methodological frameworks. Conceptually, I noted how desire has a rich history in the humanities, and I drew from Western philosophy and religious studies scholarship to ascertain some of its key features. This work suggested that the emotional experience of longing or
yearning reflects the mind’s preoccupation with realizing a particular state of affairs (Schroeder, 2015). Schroeder (2015) also notes how desires can be multiple and situational, with some desires standing but inactive while other, occurrent desires are prioritized. And he (2004) suggests that clues to the presence of desire can include signs of (dis)pleasure, (de)motivation, and reward (or punishment). Building on these features I discussed how James Smith (2009, 2013) maintains that the individual experience of desire is best seen as situated in specific communities that direct members to imagined ideals through orienting narratives, which are often tacit, fragmented, and conveyed through verbal and non-verbal activity.

I saw many parallels between desire as framed in the humanities and certain theories and concepts in the learning sciences. Sociocultural theory helped me to establish desire as something socially constructed in specific settings (cf., Holland, 1992), and cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 1987, 1999; Engeström & Sannino, 2010) offered me a way to conceptualize teacher preparation programs as systems and the activity within them as driven to realize certain objects, or ideals. As I interpreted the CHAT literature, individual subjects are encouraged to desire the objects of activity even if those desires reflect different ways of making sense of the objects (Nardi, 2005). In a teacher preparation program, I therefore suggested that beginning teachers would be asked to orient their hearts toward three specific objects: 1) broad visions for education (generalized objects), 2) practices and their immediate outcomes (pedagogical objects), and 3) ways of being a teacher (ontological objects). I ventured that beginning teachers might come to desire those objects by developing heartfelt investments in them.

With this framework in mind, I used a qualitative methodology that encouraged immersion in CTP and MONT. Specifically, I employed constructivist grounded theory
City Teacher Prep (CTP) | Montessori teacher training (MONT)
---|---
- Residency in underserved schools in a large urban district in the western U.S. | - Residency in Montessori schools, most private but some charter schools
- Grad courses at a local university, including a weekly seminar on general instructional practice | - Summer session; many courses, including Montessori Phil. and Classroom Leadership
- Setting features of seminar: technology friendly, business-casual dress code | - Setting features of summer session: Montessori materials, informal, casual dress
- Program tasks: make measurable gains in teaching quality; interview and get hired to teach in partner district | - Program tasks: create albums of lesson plans; demonstrate developing mastery of materials and lessons

Orienting narratives | Heartfelt investment (?) | Orienting narratives | Heartfelt investment (?)
---|---|---|---
**Serve rather than save students in underserved communities** | Several focal beginners’ hearts seemed invested, with some seeming more invested upon entering program | **To realize Montessori’s cosmic vision of a peace by teaching toward a positive and holistic image of the child** | Many beginners’ hearts seemed invested, with some expressing investment in serving underserved children
**Increase the status of teaching/teachers** | | **Spread Montessori to reach more children** | |

**Pedagogical Object**

**Raise student achievement through data-driven instruction and effective classroom management** | Some beginners hearts seemed more invested than others; a few beginners wanted teaching to be fun for them and students | **Inspire children to become self-directed, joyful learners through practices including storytelling and observation** | Some beginners’ hearts seemed invested given efforts to get better and willingness to give themselves time to improve
**Show minimum levels of instructional proficiency** | **Develop children’s academic skills** |

**Ontological Object**

**Be who you are but also be growth-oriented and positive** | Some beginners’ hearts seemed invested in being growth-oriented; several focal beginners looked to mentors for desirable images of teaching | **Be engaged in self-transformation into someone who can be child-centered** | Many beginners seemed to enter program with hearts invested; transforming into Mont. teacher seemed harder for those with “traditional” teaching experience
**Become an educational leader** | **Work toward becoming a skillful veteran who can bring others into the tradition** |

Table 7.1. Side-by-side comparison of findings from analysis of CTP and MONT. The bolded text is the primary narrative identified in the analysis while the italicized text reveals additional/other narratives.

(Charmaz, 1995, 2007; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2003) to more effectively attend to the texture of desire as it might appear within the preparation activity and the beginning teachers’ unique experiences in their programs. Analytically, I coded my data with an eye to developing and
refining my understanding of possible orienting narratives and what the beginners appeared to make of them on a heartfelt level.

In the findings chapters I mostly addressed my first two research questions by teasing out how the instructors, program leaders, and visiting administrators might be directing beginning teachers toward what was desired—e.g., “what we want”—of teachers and teaching. And I attempted to show how some of the beginning teachers at CTP and MONT appeared to have their hearts invested in and perhaps desired the objects framed within those narratives. I have summarized these findings in Table 7.1. I also addressed my third question on multiple and competing desires by revealing the possibility of other orienting narratives and desired objects in each program. In CTP, for example, there were indications that, along with the expectation that they be growth-oriented, the beginners were being directed toward a vision of themselves as educational leaders. And at MONT the instructors stressed joyful, self-directed learners as the desired object of instruction, though they also acknowledged that measurable academic growth was desirable. The sixth chapter in particular indicated how some of the beginners appeared to be juggling a desire to teach with desires to do more for students and be more professionally than they imagined teaching could afford, especially at CTP.

In this last chapter I review my findings to more thoroughly address my fourth research question: How do the orienting narratives and objects of desire compare between preparation programs? This leads me back to the notion of the professional ideal introduced in the first chapter and how the programs illustrate a tension between possible desires for teaching framed by this ideal versus a vocational ideal. From there I discuss limitations of the study and proposed directions for future research, after which I conclude with some final thoughts on desire.
Comparing the orienting narratives and objects at CTP and MONT

The generalized object(s) of teaching

As I have defined it, the generalized object of teaching invites consideration of broad ideals and visions of the world that teaching is meant to bring about—*telos*—and how to make them visible to the beginning teachers. Research suggests that clarity and coherence of vision for what beginners can expect of their work is an important component of teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Shulman, 1998). Comparing the generalized objects I teased out at CTP and MONT, it is possible to see how visions and the ideals therein can differ in substance but also in their scope and breadth.

At CTP, the vision that emerged from my analysis—teachers serving rather than saving students in underserved communities—was arguably shorter-term and perhaps more narrowly defined than the comparatively distant and all-encompassing vision at MONT of a peaceful society. Indeed, CTP was focused on having teachers address the needs of a specific population of students, most of color and living in poverty. A possible advantage of this narrower focus was that it could encourage beginners to train their hearts to invest more directly in the immediate and pressing issues of disenfranchised students, and such investment seemed evident with the CTP beginners whom I interviewed.

However, a narrower vision may have risked limiting the imagination for teaching and what it might accomplish. At times during CTP’s weekly seminar it seemed that the refrain of “do it for the kids” was used to brush aside beginners’ concerns over their stressful working conditions. The pressure and stress, they were told, would be worth the difficulties they were enduring. Also, noticeably absent from the seminars I attended was any discussion of the world or society that teachers might create through their classroom actions. There was an assumed
good to pushing kids to do as asked for the sake of academic success. The possibility that such efforts might contain a hidden curriculum that actually prepared students for lower status employment opportunities (Anyon, 1980; LeCompte, 1978) seemed to go unaddressed. It therefore seemed likely that, absent a more theoretically informed reflection on what they were asking of students, the CTP beginners’ expressed desires for order and control could generate classroom environments that might prioritize obedience and suppress opportunities for student creativity and cultural expression (Goodman, 2013).

It also seemed possible that the refrain to “do it for the kids,” though noble, could be failing to adequately address the question of what we might expect the kids to do for society with their education. By looking beyond the school walls, MONT’s cosmic vision arguably spoke to this concern by offering a clearer framing of how an education served children so that they might serve society. But the breadth of MONT’s vision, too, could be problematic. The notion of a *cosmic* vision portends universality—something that transcends differences—which could conceivably allow Montessori teachers to justify a choice not to serve underserved students by taking comfort in a belief that they still serve the greater good by teaching privileged children. In other words, interpreted through a neo-liberal view of the world that insists on downplaying differences (Bonilla-Silva, 2010), Montessori’s cosmic vision could inadequately orient beginning teachers to inequities in education and their role in addressing them. Indeed, it seemed unlikely that the expressed desire among MONT’s beginners and instructors to spread Montessori to underserved children could happen in the absence of a more specific desire to serve disenfranchised communities.
The pedagogical object(s)

The pedagogical object as I use it pertains to the more immediate aims of instruction and the teaching tools emphasized by a teacher preparation program. I noted how recently there has been a lot of inquiry into the instructional practices considered most effective and most necessary for beginning teachers to learn during the short window of their preparation (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Windschitl et al., 2009; Thompson, Windschitl, & Braaten, 2013; Zeichner, 2012). This effort promises to ensure beginners who are prepared to confidently and competently instruct students on day one even if mastery is likely to take some time. Contrasting CTP and MONT, however, shows how the aims of mastery and perceived time for improvement can differ in important ways.

The differences between CTP and MONT appeared to be a matter of priorities, which arguably set the conditions desire in two ways. First, the programs could be seen directing the beginners to what they were expected to desire most of their instruction. In line with tenets of data-driven instruction (cf., Hamilton et al., 2009), CTP encouraged its beginners to keep cycling back to evidence of students’ academic achievement on various assessments to evaluate one’s instructional choices and quality. Cultivating self-directed and joyful students might be useful if it led to better achievement, but it did not come across as the ultimate goal of instruction at CTP and was arguably secondary to academic progress. As such, I got the impression that extrinsic rewards (i.e., receiving stickers on daily performance logs, seeing one’s name badge moving up a scale of achievement, etc.) and threats of punishment (e.g., movement of a name clip from green to red) to combat students’ misbehavior and distaste for certain learning tasks were considered acceptable tradeoffs if they resulted in students completing those tasks and making academic gains.
This was not the case at MONT, where the way a teacher produced hard working students was as important as achieving this result. Coerced work from students was considered anathema to the Montessori philosophy. And while academic progress mattered, MONT instructors emphasized that it should not come at the expense of children being consistently self-directed and capable of taking pleasure in their work. MONT beginners were therefore encouraged to cycle back to students’ affect, work dispositions, and engagement with materials to evaluate their instructional quality.

These differences in instructional priority appeared to establish parameters for what the beginning teachers at each program seemed to desire of their instruction. In seminars and interviews, CTP beginners often talked about wanting students to be well behaved and were displeased by what they viewed as inconsistent and inefficient classroom practice. They also mentioned being pleased by students doing what they were told. Sarah, for example, explained to me how it felt good to have students walk quietly in a line down the hall. And Mark told his peers in seminar how much he admired his new mentor teacher’s ability to command students’ attention and keep them on task. Along with behavior, some of them mentioned looked forward to raising students’ achievement scores. For example, during the presentations on the last day of seminar a few CTP beginners shared their desire for positive indicators of achievement and seemed to take pleasure in being able to report growth in learning during the final presentations.

The MONT beginners likewise wanted students to do what was expected, though the desire was for students to work without being asked or coerced—for them to gravitate toward lesson materials, get them out, and become engrossed in figuring them out. Watching this unfold in the classroom and lead to breakthroughs in understanding could be satisfying. Mike and Tara, for example, both mentioned to me in interviews that they found it fulfilling when students
experienced *Aha!* moments while working on a task of interest. MONT beginners also took pleasure in developing new materials for students to try out and further their learning. This was evident during an interview with Tara, who explained how making new materials had become something that she looked forward to as a teacher. MONT beginners also seemed to enjoy delivering lessons in a way that would inspire students. In fact, some of them mentioned that they were having so much fun delivering lessons that they seemed worried that it might indicate their desire to be the center of attention—something Montessori teachers worked to avoid.

Second, the programs could be seen setting the conditions for improvement and how beginners might develop their desire to get better as teachers. For CTP beginners, acting on a desire to improve one’s pedagogy (or a desire to not fail) required making good use of formal feedback provided by those with the authority to decide if instruction suitably demonstrated (or failed to demonstrate) particular performance criteria. CTP beginners were also expected to take initiative to seek assistance and resources to improve their practice. At MONT, instructors and mentor teachers also provided beginners with feedback on their teaching with the expectation that they use it to improve, though the beginners were given more focused time to practice their instructional moves through the summer session and seemed under less pressure to succeed as quickly as their CTP peers. A desire to get better could thus be viewed as a longer-term project for MONT beginners. By comparison, CTP beginners were expected to show minimum levels of proficiency three months into their residency year, and they could be counseled out after six or seven months as had happened to Ryan. It is worth noting, however, that the timeline for improvement varied dramatically between those MONT beginners serving as assistants versus lead teachers during their residency. David and Kate, both lead teachers at charter Montessori
schools, seemed to have a more palpable desire for expedited improvement akin to what CTP beginners experienced.

Finally, I want to note the strong resistance that members of the MONT community showed toward to pedagogical object of raising student achievement. Several MONT participants mentioned this issue as a major reason they sought out Montessori. It seemed that some CTP beginners shared a similar concern over testing and the centrality of test-based achievement. Indeed, the strong emotions surrounding testing and raising test scores—the revulsion bordering on disdain—is something that many educational researchers and policy-makers seem to be ignoring. Training teachers to do “what works” for the sake of raising achievement levels on tests may ultimately fail if teachers consider what works to be undesirable given what it aims to accomplish.

The ontological object(s)

In my scheme, the ontological object represents certain ways of being a teacher—characteristics and qualities that a preparation program may orient its beginning teachers toward as desirable. Though contentious (Hiebert & Morris, 2012), I mentioned that researchers have been looking into what it means for individuals to become teachers (Alsup, 2006; Danielewicz, 2001; Hammerness et al., 2007; Horn, et al., 2008; Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008) and what dispositions (Diez & Murrell, 2010; Villegas, 2007) and traits (cf., Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014) should be treated as most desirable for new teachers. My analysis suggested that both CTP and MONT could be seen attempting to cultivate the qualities considered important for being either a CTP or MONT teacher.

There were notable differences in those qualities. The beginners interviewed at CTP, for example, were under the impression that their program chose individuals who desired to make an
impact in underserved schools. During weekly seminars, program leaders and visiting administrators often reminded CTP beginners that fulfilling this desire required a learner mindset and positive outlook. By comparison, during courses and interviews the MONT beginners gave the impression that they saw themselves as individuals who shared a heartfelt concern for teaching the whole child. The MONT instructors conveyed the significance of this concern as a cornerstone of Montessori philosophy and encouraged the beginners to become the kinds of people capable of allowing the child’s needs to be paramount. In fact, there was general agreement between the instructors and beginners at MONT that their view of children and their version of child-centered pedagogy were uncommon in traditional teaching, and they could be seen building a collective identity in part by defining themselves against a negative perception of typical teachers (see Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). It is worth noting, however, that identity formation through negation was also evident at CTP as the program’s instructors and beginners defined themselves as teachers against a negative view of urban public school teachers as overly conservative, pessimistic, and resistant to change. The truth of this perception seemed to matter less than its usefulness for collectively justifying the progressive, reform-oriented image of the ideal teacher they strove to embody. Thus, in both programs it seemed that the practitioner one desired to become was shaped in part by a shared construction of who one did not want to become as a teacher.

In some respects it seemed that the differences in the programs’ ontological objects reflected differences in the accountability measures that the beginners at CTP and MONT would face as new teachers. CTP was preparing its teachers for the accountability systems of contemporary public schools, wherein CTP beginners could expect to be formally evaluated by the district and have their students tested several times throughout the year. A growth-mindset,
coupled with a positive outlook, would enable beginners to receive and make use of evaluation feedback. It would also ensure sufficient plasticity while teaching in an ever-changing landscape of reforms (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). At times it also seemed that CTP was preparing its beginning teachers to handle the many sources of disappointment in urban public school teaching that made a drive to “keep pushing,” as Jason (instructor) coached them, a necessity for survival, not to mention success [CTP-seminar-101013].

MONT beginners could expect a different accountability system that arguably afforded them more autonomy as lead teachers. Perhaps this was a result of Montessori’s relatively uniform method, which might result in self-regulated quality control. If so, this would explain why the ontological focus at MONT seemed less about becoming comfortable with external demands for accountability (e.g., a surprise evaluation from a principal) than about remaining true to the Montessori philosophy by maintaining attention on the children. Children were certainly the focus at CTP, too, though the CTP beginners were arguably more concerned about sustaining this focus while having to juggle a number of institutional responsibilities. Indeed, in interviews the CTP beginners talked less about having to being growth-oriented or positive than having to be “Type A” to manage the stress of teaching and still stay ambitious enough to excel.

Finally, both programs seemed to expect a selfless disposition, though there were some intriguing differences in how that selflessness was framed. CTP seemed to be encouraging its beginners to see the stress of teaching as part of giving one’s self to the greater cause. Hence the frequent refrain of teaching being “for the kids.” A selfless teacher therefore wouldn’t take criticism personally but see it as constructive and for the good of the children. At MONT, selflessness seemed to a way of being present in the classroom—a self at ease, lacking a desire to seek affirmation and attention. This distinction was evident in the desires expressed by beginners.
during interviews. CTP beginners often talked about how they wanted to go above and beyond for their students even if it was stressful (and perhaps unsustainable as a career). By comparison, MONT beginners shared their struggles with being less teacher-centered in their instruction so that students’ interests could be the fundamental driver of classroom activity. In stark terms, a desire for selflessness thus seemed to depend on whether beginners thought they needed to give of the self (CTP) or contain the self (MONT).

**Summary of programmatic differences**

These are only a few of the many differences between the programs, and I want to note that the narratives and the objects I have teased out weren’t necessarily fixed or unalterable. Nor were they necessarily the exclusive purview of each program, and participants from either CTP or MONT could arguably lay claim to the other program’s narratives. For example, participants at CTP could argue that their emphasis on data-driven instruction and classroom management was intended to similarly fulfill a pedagogical object of self-directed, joyful learners. And MONT participants could claim that they shared CTP’s ontological object and wanted their beginning teachers to be positive and growth-oriented. Even so, I find that the programmatic differences help reveal how desires for particular ideals factors into the unique character of each program and their relative strengths and weaknesses.

For the *generalized object(s) of teaching*, I have suggested that CTP appeared to direct its beginners toward a compelling vision of teaching as service for a certain population of students. This was not the case at MONT, which instead pointed its beginners toward a compelling vision of a peaceful society achievable through teaching. I postulated that the CTP vision might have trained focus on the needs of underserved students in ways that MONT’s vision did not, but that the CTP vision inadequately imagined how those students might themselves serve the greater
good. For the pedagogical object(s), I indicated that at MONT one had to be able to take pleasure in seeing children’s enthusiasm and their independence while working on a particular lesson or project. CTP beginners could likewise find gratification in their daily practice, though preferably in measured signs of academic growth. I also observed how the beginners at both programs arguably desired to get better, through CTP beginners seemed to view this project as expedited whereas MONT beginners felt that they had time to improve. Finally, I noted how both programs sought to establish certain qualities as desirable based on how their beginners were expected to be in the classroom and how they would be held accountable as teachers of record. And I revealed how CTP and MONT both directed their beginners towards somewhat different versions of an ideal of selflessness.

As I interpret them, these differences can be recast as a series of useful questions for designers of teacher preparation that include:

• Should a program’s vision for teaching be expansive or narrow? Is it enough to stress the aim of teaching all students or should a specific population be identified to orient beginning teachers accordingly?

• Where can beginners expect to take pleasure while developing their instructional competency? What should the timescale be for improvement?

• How should beginning teachers behave as emerging practitioners? How should beginners comport them-selves in the service of students?

Depending on how such questions are addressed, programs will establish conditions for the construction of certain objects of preparation activity as more desirable than others.
Comparing the heartfelt experiences of learning teaching

As noted in my methods chapter, I came to view affect and emotionality as a clue to the heart’s role in desire, as individuals would presumably desire things that caused pleasure, a feeling of motivation, or a sense of accomplishment. Also, in situations that evoked a sense of discomfort, individuals might desire for circumstances to change or be different. Generally I found that the beginners in both programs did not show many obvious signs of distress during the seminars/courses. At MONT I noticed a palpable enthusiasm for the practices, purposes, and opportunity to become a Montessorian. At CTP, however, there was some dissent, with a few beginners openly expressing concern over data-driven instruction and standardized testing, important aspects of their program’s pedagogical object. In her final presentation on the last day of seminar, for example, one beginner seemed distressed by the “tunnel vision on test scores—that that’s what matters [CTP-seminar-051514].” James at CTP also admitted to being worried about the dominance of testing at his school. It was unclear how many of the other CTP beginners shared these concerns. However, there was reason to believe that CTP beginners felt more tension than was visible in the weekly seminar.

Interviews with focal beginners at CTP helpfully revealed how outwardly things could seem fine, but internally the heart could be searching, weighing options, and in some cases struggling to invest in certain ideals and futures. A potent example of this was Ben, who described having to wear a cloak of positivity in the classroom to cover his frustration over not being able to be himself as a teacher. For other CTP beginners, internal conflicts seemed less dramatic, though in the sixth chapter I showed how they could still be potentially powerful when it came to imagined career paths. Kelsey, for example, was by every indication an exemplary beginner at CTP. She received good performance evaluations, her mentor talked highly of her,
and she had no trouble getting hired to teach in the district. And yet she was overwhelmed by the workload and nervous that teaching would keep her from finding satisfaction in her personal life. She said that she loved teaching, though with a standing desire for a life outside of work her heart seemed somewhat guarded and perhaps reluctant to make a complete investment in teaching. This was a common theme among the focal CTP beginners, who expressed joy over teaching but still questioned a future in the classroom and seemed to be entertaining standing desires to do more and be more than they thought teaching allowed.

By comparison, the MONT beginners showed less visible signs that their hearts were distressed by the orienting narratives in their program. Most of their obvious agitation was directed at “traditional” schooling, and generally they gave the impression of having a heartfelt investment in the objects that defined the Montessori system of education into which they were entering. This was true even if they faced challenges in the classroom. For example, I noted how Alex and David shared some of their struggles with becoming the kind of teacher—child-oriented and less willing to use punitive disciplinary strategies—necessary to make good on a heartfelt investment in the Montessori philosophy and method. And yet, neither beginner appeared to be contemplating leaving teaching. Even Kate, arguably the MONT beginner with the most distressed heart, did not blame Montessori or her preparation so much as the demands of teaching in a charter school and features of herself that she thought might be incompatible with classroom teaching.

Comparing the beginners in the two programs, it thus seemed that the CTP beginners were more likely than their MONT counterparts to be experiencing tension between what they desired and what their program expected them to desire. This difference might reflect the fact that the MONT beginners seemed to have chosen their program precisely because of the

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alignment they sensed between their hearts and the Montessori method and philosophy. MONT beginners tended to have more teaching experience than their CTP peers and frequently mentioned choosing their program because it was what they wanted of teaching. Also, many of them had served in Montessori classrooms prior to entering the program and therefore knew it would be a good fit. CTP beginners on the other hand had less experience with teaching besides what they had experienced as students. They entered CTP with a broad desire to make a difference as teachers but, with little experience in classrooms, admitted to being unsure about what this would entail. As such, they appeared to hit rough spots as the demands of teaching became increasingly evident over the course of the year. Questions of *Is this really what I want to do?* and *Is this really who I want to be?* seemed unresolved for the CTP beginners as they jumped into teaching with high stakes attached to their performance after only a few months in the classroom. Indeed, though they spent a year in a classroom, the sense of urgency to get better for the kids’ sake seemed to shorten the window for growing into the role and not only appropriating its practices but also investing their hearts in teaching in a way that felt comfortable and sustainable. This might explain why some CTP beginners appeared uncertain of a long-term future in the classroom.

**Different ideals for teaching**

In the first chapter I proposed that we needed a richer discussion of ideals of teaching, and I suggested that current reforms revealed a desire among researchers and policy-makers for teacher preparation to reflect a professional ideal. Taking a wide-angle view of the programs and the comparisons I have offered in this chapter, I would argue that CTP appeared to be pursuing this professional ideal more than MONT. Its learning activities and certification were tied directly to a common language and codified body of knowledge based on clear, professionally
mandated standards for performance (Darling-Hammond, Wei, & Johnson, 2009; Shulman, 1998; Wise, 2005). But the same could be said of MONT, which also had a common language, knowledge base, and set of standards. One could thus argue that the two programs had established two different renditions of the teaching profession and professional ideal. Though a reasonable interpretation, this glosses over an important distinction in how teaching was imagined within each program and risks understanding MONT in terms that could lead one to underappreciate what captivated the hearts of its practitioners. Indeed, the more I studied MONT, the more I came to see it as attempting to realize a vocational ideal of service rather than a professional ideal. Treating such ideals as framing a productive tension in teaching (Buijs, 2005) may help explain how each program leaned in opposite directions yet struggled to hold tight to what appeared to be their preferred ideal.

In broad brushstrokes, the vocational ideal focuses on the inner call to teach while the professional ideal attends to the effectiveness of the response as judged by a community of individuals who have received similar calls (Huebner, 1987). Shulman (1998) observes that the effort to professionalize teaching has remained a problem for some time. To make his point, Shulman cites the following passage from Dewey:

I doubt whether we, as educators, keep in mind with sufficient constancy the fact that the problem of training teachers is one species of a more generic affair—that of training for the professions. Our problem is akin to that of training architects, engineers, doctors, lawyers, etc. Moreover, since (shameful and incredible as it seems) the vocation of teaching is practically the last to recognize the need of specific professional preparation, there is all the more reason for teachers to try to find what they may learn from the more extensive and matured experience of other callings. (Dewey, 1904, p.10)
To address this “need,” Shulman proposes six characteristics that define a profession, the first of which—“the obligations of service to others, as in a ‘calling’”—I want to highlight and explore (italic’s in original, p. 516).

Elaborating on this criterion, he suggests that professions serve “important social ends” through the specific and uncommon skills and knowledge they possess (p. 516). An important part of preparation, therefore, is the formation of a vision of those social ends and their moral necessity. He contends that too often such formation is a neglected dimension in most professions, with the exception of the clergy. Shulman maintains that teacher preparation tends to instill a sense of service without adequately connecting it to instructional practice, or what it looks like to be of service.

Interestingly, Shulman does not dismiss the “call” to service implied by Dewey’s labeling of teaching as a vocation. Rather, he seeks to establish it as the essence of the endeavor—the core around which the professional structures are built. Yet others argue that, from the perspective of the individual practitioner, those structures have co-opted teaching and buried the call and its crucial role in the work (Buijs, 2005; Hansen, 2001; Huebner, 1987; Palmer, 1997). Indeed, appreciating the vocational ideal requires a clearer picture than Shulman provides of what it means to be called to teach. Here I turn to Joseph Buijs (2005), who defines the call to teach as “an imperative that imposes itself” on the individual, which he explains by stating:

To claim, for instance, that someone feels called to be a parent or an artist has an element of moral obligation. In this view, it is not that an individual particularly wants to be a parent or seeks to become an artist. It is, rather, that he feels impelled to become a parent or that she is convinced she should become an artist. Nevertheless, whether we respond to such a call, whether we carry out the perceived obligation, is a matter of intentional
choice. Since a calling in life, if it is consciously experienced at all, is unique to each individual, one’s response likewise engages one deeply and personally, both in making the choice of acceptance, or rejection, and in taking full responsibility for it. (p. 335)

For Buijs, the sense of obligation and the personal experience of it are important features of the call that threaten the professional hegemony over teaching. Professions, he observes, tend to focus practitioners’ attention away from the personal dimensions of practice toward concerns over expertise and autonomy with respect to clearly delineated standards of performance. Teaching thus becomes depersonalized as effort is poured into defining the role of teacher in terms of what it generally accomplishes and how effectively. (This is exemplified in Ball & Forzani’s [2009] case for professional teacher training.) He also contends that the professional view casts activity in “self-serving or self-interested terms” (p. 338). This is because the professional renders services with attention to how well they meet standards and achieve promised outcomes. In this way, a paramount concern of professionals is service of the profession (and its relative status). Buijs also suggests that a professional view of teaching can lead to selfishness as individuals treat teaching as a choice among many other professions and ply their trade with an unquestioned expectation of remuneration.

By contrast, a vocational view foregrounds those being served and the interpersonal aspects of the role. Buijs argues that “it is students who give shape to the vocation of teaching; they are the purpose behind the call and the recipients of a commitment to it” (p. 338). The selflessness, he contends, comes in trying to meet the demands of the students rather than the demands of the profession. He likens the call that students offer to a gift that a teacher is honored to receive and takes responsibility for in her work. Viewed as such, remuneration feels selfish, akin to expecting the giver of a gift to pay you for receiving it. Furthermore, Buijs observes that
the obligatory, duty-bound aspect of the vocational ideal does not consider teaching a choice. Those pursuing this ideal “do not merely choose teaching from among a range of alternative careers that may suit [one’s] personal interests” (p. 336). Teaching in the vocational sense is thus not a task that can be desired. Rather, it is something done because it needs to be done.

Buijs observes that we are currently tilting toward the professional ideal given the insistence on standards of teaching performance and the hand wringing over the status of teaching. Dwayne Huebner (1987) suggests that schools are not designed to treat teaching vocationally, with teachers expected to be “subservient” and to adhere to an “image of teaching” that undervalues their humanity and personal experiences (p. 381). But in Buijs view this does not mean that the professional ideal is fundamentally flawed, and he sees room for both ideals as teachers share how they have answered the call to teach and push one another to improve. Indeed, he points out that the vocational ideal has its weaknesses, too, notably in its capacity to reduce teaching to idiosyncratic preferences that make it difficult to define excellence and provide teachers with helpful benchmarks for growth. It can also compromise a teacher’s capacity to be sufficiently objective with students in a way that challenges them to achieve more than they thought possible.

Elements of the tension between these ideals were evident in both CTP and MONT. On the face of it, CTP’s framing of teaching as service could be interpreted as a sign of a vocational concern. But the program’s major focus on meeting standards of instructional performance suggest otherwise. Discussions of individual children and interpersonal relationships between the beginners and their students were far less common in the formal activity of weekly seminars than discussions of the standards and measures considered necessary for meeting professional expectations. And most of the beginners’ concerns appeared to be over failing to meet those
expectations. Also, a few of the CTP beginners that I interviewed seemed to treat teaching as more of a choice among other possible career choices.

I would also suggest that CTP’s vilification of a desire to “save” students could be viewed as an implicit acknowledgement of the selfishness lurking beneath the cloak of nobility as program participants asked themselves in secret, *What’s in it for me?* Perhaps CTP participants worried that viewing teaching as “saving” drew too much attention to the “savior”—to the teacher as a hero. Insisting that it was service could have been a way to deflect or diminish a desire for such attention. But I wondered if that desire lingered and was perhaps nurtured by program leaders’ frequently telling the cohort that they were an elite group, hand-selected to make a difference. I also wondered if the vilification of “saving” was a way of muting the call of poverty and systemic racism. I noted how program leaders coached CTP beginners to avoid using race and poverty as an excuse for students’ low achievement. This was framed as crucial for maintaining a belief that all students can learn, a belief one proved by staying focused on fulfilling standards of the profession. But I would contend that the call of poverty and racism requires a greater commitment of self than professional service may render. It seems to me that if teachers really heard such a call, they would feel compelled to not only serve students in dire need but also to save them—to transcend professional norms when necessary and jeopardize their careers for the sake of extending a hand and holding on at all costs. In my estimation, evidence of this call was largely absent from the formal activity in both CTP and MONT, though it was arguably present as focal beginners in both programs discussed their personal experiences and desires for teaching.

Compared to CTP, MONT seemed to define teaching more in vocational rather than professional terms. For example, MONT beginners were encouraged to orient themselves to the
interpersonal relationships they established with children and to really listen for clues to their unique needs and passions. To serve these ends, observation was prioritized over measurement and connections—e.g., between students, students and materials, students and the teacher—were positioned as more valuable than achieving standardized academic benchmarks. Also, MONT beginners were apt to talk about Montessori teaching as having lured them in, as if they had been called to it and were obliged to answer. However, there were aspects of MONT that arguably reflected a professional ideal. For example, the program had standards of performance that it aimed to uphold. Also, indications among participants of a personal fit with Montessori could be construed as expressions of satisfaction over having made the right choice of a sub-genre within the teaching profession. Finally, as noted earlier, MONT participants could be criticized for either not hearing or ignoring the call of those children most in need—children like those whom CTP served.

Indeed, it was not clear that either program fully embraced the vocational ideal. But then it may be unreasonable to expect individuals to enter teaching with a duty-oriented obligation firmly established in their hearts. David Hansen (2001) maintains that an inner call to teach develops over time in the presence of children and a community of practitioners similarly committed to serving them. As he explains,

> Countless men and women do enter teaching with a strong desire to work with children, youth, or adults. But for many teachers, what seems to happen is that becoming involved in the enterprise generates an enduring spirit of service. They take on the call to teach, rather than beginning their careers with their minds made up about it. (p. ix)

Thus, it remains to be seen if the beginning teachers in either program will eventually “take on the call” with conviction. Whether or not they stay in the classroom, I would argue, is likely to
be more than a matter of their possessing “grit” (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014) or
exhibiting instructional competence (cf., Cochran-Smith, 2012) than whether or not the
beginning teachers are afforded unimpeded access to the call and the time and support to hear it.
Lacking such access, it seems possible that beginners’ desires for teaching could diminish, with
other roles or forms of service becoming desirable.

**Limitations and directions for future research**

There were several limitations in this study that I want to highlight. First, I based the
orienting narratives mostly on chunks of talk and on the activities in which they occurred, and
did not attend as much to the movement of bodies and use of materials. Given the centrality of
tool mediation in CHAT theory, this latter omission may leave some unsatisfied with my use of
the theory. Second, I have played with the concept of narrative rather loosely in line with my
reading of Smith (2013), using it to construct narratives in ways different from how the concept
is typically defined (cf., Bruner, 1991, 2004) and used in narrative research (cf., Clandinin,
Connelly, & Craig, 1995; Craig, 2014). Third, I admit that my conceptualization and application
of the notion of a “heartfelt investment” is clunky. I have a sense that there is something to the
sociocultural construction of an affective, heartfelt attachment to various “objects” that shapes
desire but is not accounted for in the concept. I am not satisfied that appropriation (Grossman,
Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999) quite captures what I am after, and a heartfelt investment gets
me closer but could still use work. Fourth, I have based my analysis on alternative teacher
preparation programs, and only two of the many programs out there. As such, caution is
warranted in generalizing my findings and claims to other preparation programs or models, such
as teacher education based in universities or colleges. Fifth, and arguably most important, I did
not interview the instructors and program leaders for their take on programmatic activity, the
aims of teaching, and what was desired of the beginning teachers. Without this information I am lacking an important check on my interpretations of what objects the beginners were being oriented toward and further insight into the program communities.

Going forward, I see promising directions for further research on desire in teacher preparation. To begin with, I think it would be helpful to account for more of the voices giving shape to the orienting narratives of teacher preparation. I am interested to know what instructors, reformers, and policy-makers make of teacher preparation in terms of desire, both their own desires and what they think beginning teachers should desire. Likewise, I think it would be useful to consider the desires of parents and students and how they contribute to the narratives and desirability of various objects in the contexts where beginners learn teaching. Also, similar to what Hammerness (2006) did in her study, I think that it would be beneficial to track beginning teachers over a longer period of time to develop a better sense of the construction of desire as it forms and is reformed in response to changing conditions in teachers’ personal and professional lives. A possible question could include: How does a calling emerge over time for beginning teachers and what might it mean in terms of teacher commitment and a desire to serve? I would also like to use the narrative methodology more faithfully to ascertain detailed stories of how desire manifests in teacher preparation. Stories such as David’s (MONT) switching paths in teaching and Ryan’s (CTP) being asked to leave teaching seemed compelling but lacking elaboration as a result of my methods. Finally, much of the richness in my conceptualization of desire was based on ideas from the religious studies literature that I presented at ICLS (Renga, 2014a) but ended up cutting from this text. This material examined St. Augustine’s definitions and experiences of desire (Miles, 1992) and the effects of modern life on our desires, notably the threat they pose to long-term vocational projects that require a more
sustained and less impulsive form of desire (Cavanaugh, 2008; Miller, 2004). I can see parallels in teaching and teacher preparation, as achievement data might indulge a desire for immediate feedback and possibly hinder a capacity to sustain long term desires for teaching (i.e., for social justice) built more on dreams and faith than on clear signs of progress.

**Final thoughts**

I agree with critics that we could benefit from better teacher preparation programs. Though I think we stand a better chance of making this happen with the heart in mind, or better yet with greater attention to how the heart affects the mind and the imaginative contents therein. We might consider foregrounding our hearts and asking how we are bringing beginning teachers into what we love of teaching. Doing so, I would suggest, invites us to ask questions such as: *Do we know what we love about teaching? What do beginners love of teaching? How do we communicate across different desires, or bring beginners respectfully into our preferred desires?*

My concern is that many of us who serve as teacher educators don’t always love what it is that we ask beginners to do. We proceed under the assumption that serving the teaching profession fulfills a duty to children and to our visions of a better world. I am not sure that this is a safe assumption. I do not doubt that profession-minded reformers have the best interests of children and society at heart. But it would be helpful, I think, if that heart were more visible, its contents and contours made available in discussions of why certain visions, practices, and ways of being a teacher matter more than others.

I would venture that the heart is front-and-center in the agendas of practice-minded reformers such as Doug Lemov and Stephen Farr, which makes their proposals for teaching and teacher preparation more acutely attuned to the concerns of many teachers, administrators, and policy makers. As I noted earlier, Farr (2010) explicitly frames his managerial vision of teaching...
as fueled by a desire to raise student achievement and, by extension, students’ access to college and all of its economic rewards. Lemov (2007) likewise builds a case for the importance of foundational practices by offering anecdotal evidence that teachers of all stripes are yearning to get better and want simple, actionable ways to do so. Both reformers give the impression that there is a generic, commonsense form of teaching and that the object and subsequent tools of teaching are obvious provided that one doesn’t overthink things. This leads them to brush aside theory, nuance, and complexity as impediments to great teaching.

Lemov goes so far as to claim that the exhibition of masterful teaching trumps all other ways of interpreting a teacher’s work. Speaking to teachers at the outset of his text he proclaims, “Someday, perhaps years later, observers may assess the philosophy expressed by what you create, but far more important than any theory is your proficiency with the lowly chisel” (p. 1). Though apparently intended to inspire awe over expert practice, this statement seems to fetishize mastery in a way that fails to appreciate the heartfelt commitments to political, spiritual, and aesthetic ideals that artists labor to express in their work. I would argue that Lemov’s is a consumerist view of practice that treats excellence as a product to be admired and devoured by privileged critics who stand safely at a distance and demand that such excellence fulfill their desires. As such, he falsely assumes that all practitioners are (or should be) driven exclusively by a desire to master their tools, when such a desire may really a byproduct of an intense desire to express or realize certain truths about the world. Indeed, my study joins a growing body of research on beginning teachers (i.e., Craig, 2014; Hammerness, 2006) that reveals how practice, theory, and the imagination are richly intertwined for beginners as they consider not only their instructional practices but also the desirability of the world they are helping to shape through those practices.

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In fact, I would contend that such intertwinning of theory and practice is present in Lemov and Farr’s respective texts even if they don’t acknowledge it. They both seem to miss how the object of teaching they emphasize—to give all children the market advantage of a college education—is premised not on a fixed reality or on undisputed truths about education but on deeply entrenched theories of how merit, competition, and liberty contribute to a particular vision of society (cf., Taylor, 2002). Like good salesmen, Lemov and Farr pitch their reforms to the desiring heart of teachers with the assumption that they aren’t interested in asking questions, reflecting, or critiquing teaching’s aims and practices. As such, they neither leave room for teachers to imagine other visions for education, nor do they encourage teachers to imagine the potential negative consequences of “champion” teaching practices or pursuing certain desired outcomes in the classroom. Doing so would arguably require theoretical engagement and critical self-reflection that might destabilize the ideal of the practice-focused, achievement-driven professional teacher that Lemov and Farr both espouse.

Academics such as Deborah Ball, Mark Windschitl, James Hiebert and others who advocate for a practice-based agenda for teacher education seem better informed of the issues and tensions facing preparation and are arguably more democratic in their efforts to transform it (Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015). While seeking to establish licensure standards requiring candidates to demonstrate proficiency in core, research-based practices, they draw upon the research literature to build arguments for why particular domains of practice, such as parent interaction or small-group discussion, deserve inclusion in teacher preparation. Unlike Lemov, they also use rigorous methods of data collection and analysis and look to the literature for proof of the efficacy of specific instructional techniques. A notable example is James Stigler and James Hiebert’s (1999) text, *The Teaching Gap*, which sets about identifying best teaching practices.
through a clearly articulated research agenda and methodology. By filtering their ideas about effective teaching through academic channels, researchers such as Stigler, Hiebert, and others show a commitment to thoughtfully constructing orienting narratives through community discussion and informed debate rather than through championing the unilateral efforts of charismatic (and controversial) reformers. Even a renowned scholar and reform leader such as Deborah Ball participates as one of a large group of advisors from a range of organizations and professional backgrounds who collectively steer the practice-based TeachingWorks initiative that she helped found. Though promising, I am skeptical that such researcher-led initiatives will capture the public imagination and reverberate in the hearts of teachers and administrators. Products of academia risk being seen as slower moving, headier versions of what Lemov and Farr offer and could benefit from more explicit efforts to show how they thoughtfully address the desires of beginning teachers, administrators, and policy-makers. In other words, it might help to know how researchers are aiming to bring teachers into what they love about teaching.

I find that comparing teaching to sailing is rather appropriate given the possibilities and hidden beauties that await both sailors and teachers as they venture forth into waters that may be charted yet still full of unknowns. Tools, technical know-how, and mental fortitude are necessary, though I think Saint-Exupéry is wise to observe that more is needed to nourish the adventurer’s spirit. A sense of direction is required along with a deep longing to go beyond the horizon. But desire can be tricky. Dafoe’s (2007) ill-fated seafarer, Robinson Crusoe, came to realize how “we never see the true State of our Condition, till it is illustrated to us by its Contraries; nor know how to value what we enjoy, but by the want of it” (p.102). Desire can thus reveal itself in the absence of things and experiences that elicit revulsion or displeasure. In fact, I would suggest that the harder we tack toward the professional ideal and live within the
displeasures of a depersonalized form of teaching, the more we will come to value and desire the vocational ideal. And I worry that this vocational ideal will persist in our collective imagination as something likely to promise more than it will offer in reality.

Through a sociocultural lens, I have worked to show how teacher preparation programs, as activity systems inhabited by emotional and imaginative beings, are places where certain desires for teaching are constructed and conveyed to beginning teachers. By comparing two different programs, I have revealed how those desires are not always the same for reasons that are justifiable even if they are perhaps flawed in various ways. It is my hope that this study contributes to our understanding of the ideals we hold of teaching, what it means to desire such ideals, and how we might chart a viable and mutually desirable course for teacher preparation.

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1 It is possible that there were more signs of enthusiasm at CTP earlier in the program year before I arrived. In interviews, both Mark and Ryan mentioned how there was a lot of positive energy when the cohort gathered over the first summer before the start of the residency component. Likewise, I did not observe MONT beginners in the second half of their residency year, so it is possible that their enthusiasm for Montessori teaching could have waned over time.

2 Along with a call to serve, Shulman also lists the following characteristics of professions: “understanding of a scholarly or theoretical kind; a domain of skilled performance or practice; the exercise of judgment under conditions of unavoidable uncertainty; the need for learning from experience as theory and practice interact; and a professional community to monitor quality and aggregate knowledge” (p. 516).

3 Those arguing for more explicit training in technique during preparation might be surprised to learn that, according to Shulman, Dewey was not advocate of using the limited time for preparation on the transmission and practice of the basic techniques of teaching, which he felt were learned through apprenticeship in the classroom. Rather, he believed that beginners stood to benefit from experiences that cultivated, in Shulman’s terms, “deeper, more scientifically oriented theoretical understanding” of teaching and learning (p. 513). Furthermore, Shulman points out that Dewey worried that forming such understanding was unlikely to happen if beginners were immersed too quickly into classrooms and expected to manage behavior. Dewey thought that beginners, overwhelmed by the work, would fail to develop the habits of inquiry and reflection necessary for insight and a greater capacity to serve students.

4 In his piece titled, The Heart of a Teacher: Identity and Integrity in Teaching, Parker Palmer (1997) offers a poetic and forceful argument for the importance of what I have been referring to as the vocational ideal. Expressing his frustration with the shifting demands of professionalized teaching, Palmer proclaims, “If good teaching cannot be reduced to technique, I no longer need suffer the pain of having my peculiar gift as a teacher crammed into the Procrustean bed of someone else's method and the standards prescribed by it. That pain is felt throughout education today as we insist upon the method du jour—leaving people who teach differently feeling devalued, forcing them to measure up to norms not their own” (p. 16).

5 Drawing on Bill Ayers, Jim Garrison, and others, I have explored the heroic dimensions of transgressing school rules for the sake of “saving” students as they are often depicted in popular film (Renga, 2014b). In the piece I argue that public glory of heroism undermines the noble intentions of teachers such as Erin Gruwell in Freedom Writers.
who leave the classroom and students to promote their ideas (and themselves). I venture that the real issue with the savior complex in teaching is that saving is viewed in selfish terms, with too much attention lavished on those doing the saving. Looking at teaching as saving children strikes me as justifiable, especially when viewed through the vocational lens.

6 For example, I was surprised to learn while reading Dana Goldstein’s (2014) history of the teacher in the U.S. that Colorado Senator Mike Johnston, the author of the controversial SB 191 mandating that teachers’ be evaluated using student achievement scores, was once a teacher disillusioned by the country’s testing regime. At some point in his career his orienting narrative changed dramatically. This has me wondering what contributed to such a change and what such knowledge might reveal about professional pathways that take people further and further from the classroom.

7 The TeachingWorks board of advisors was accessed at http://www.teachingworks.org/about/boardofadvisors
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Appendix A. Developing a sociocultural theory of learning rooted in desire

Though I eventually settled on activity theory for my study, I began by developing a richer understanding of sociocultural theory by examining the works of several of its key architects. As the passages below reveal, this led me to consider the ramifications of choosing a particular theoretical orientation and permitted me to trace a path from sociocultural theory and related empirical work to the concept of desire as it came up in Martin Packer & Jessie Goicoechea’s (2000) argument for an ontology compatible with the theory. Packer & Goicoechea’s piece, which builds on Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger’s (1991) seminal work, offered me a helpful bridge between socially situated learning and activity theory by offering a way to theorize the individual—the “subject” in activity theory—as an embodied, desiring being immersed in a landscape of emotion and meaning.

Learning as ubiquitous, socially situated activity

How we understand what it means to be a learner depends on how learning is framed by a particular community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the broadest sense, Robert Kegan (1982, 1994, 2000) suggests that learning is about change, and theories of human learning are contingent upon what form—or operationalized aspect of human physiology, psychology, or social activity—is seen as changing. Educators and researchers have recognized many forms, including knowledge, skills, practices, discourses, participation, motivation, and identity, to name a few. Which forms are highlighted, how they are defined, and how they are related to one another signify certain assumptions about learning, and much disagreement exists regarding these assumptions.

Anna Sfard (1998) characterizes the debate as a difference in metaphors reflecting conflicting views of learning as acquisition versus participation. Learning as acquisition is the older and more established metaphor, and it frames learning as a process of giving and receiving
knowledge. The metaphor of participation challenges this framing by questioning the central claim of knowledge as a thing and shifts the emphasis to the activity of learners and contexts of learning. Accordingly, “the permanence of having gives way to the constant flux of doing” (italics in original; p. 6). For researchers this entails an ontological shift from seeing learners as receptacles to active agents “interested in participating in certain kinds of activities rather than in accumulating private possessions” (p. 6). In this way, individuals are seen as participating in and across domains of social activity, using artifacts of symbolic interpretation, like language, that are imbued with meaning (Beach, 2003). To capture learning, researchers assuming a participatory framework must examine activity within a web of social relations.

Indeed, Jean Lave (2000) recalls that it was the social, interactive activity at a conference that led her to view activity itself as learning. Together with Etienne Wenger (1991), she developed a framework for understanding how activity develops within and shapes social settings, which they called ‘legitimate peripheral participation’. This framing emphasizes ‘knowing’ rather than ‘knowledge’ and the significance of participation in situ. It has opened up myriads of new ways to view students, teachers, and schools as dynamically interwoven. Researchers who have adopted this ‘situated’ view shift learning out of the head to examine subjects’ participation in social and cultural contexts. According to Hilda Borko (2004), “Situative theorists conceptualize learning as changes in participation in socially organized activities, and individuals’ use of knowledge as an aspect of their participation in social practices” (p. 4).

A profound implication of this framing is that learning is much broader and more pervasive than typically assumed. As Jean Lave (2000) explains, “It is difficult, when looking closely at everyday activity, to avoid the conclusion that learning is ubiquitous in ongoing
activity, though often unrecognized as such” (p. 201). For her, learning is ubiquitous because activity is ubiquitous, a feature of our inevitable participation in the world. In some sense, then, the notion of ‘lifelong learning’ has an unnecessary qualifier because we are constantly learning throughout our lives.¹

Furthermore, what we are doing is socially mediated, so even when we are acting alone, we are re-enacting what we have seen or done in relation to others. This means that we all play some implicit or explicit part in one another’s learning. Lave maintains that “[p]eople in activity are skillful at, and are more often than not engaged in, helping each other to participate in changing ways in a changing world” (p. 201). We may be remiss to consider such helping as ‘teaching’ given how intertwined the deliberate activity of promoting learning in others has become with the role of ‘teacher’. Likewise, it may be hard to disentangle the activity of learning from the role of ‘student’. Failing to do so, however, may lead us to miss a lot of crucial learning and teaching activity. Lave points out that we tend to overlook or downplay the “improvisational, future creating character of mundane practice”, which she sees as evidenced in educational researchers’ “persistence in denaturalizing the social process within educational institutions by turning them into analytic objects” (p. 201). For Lave, treating teaching-and-learning as a closed system of interaction between teachers and students is problematic because it both limits conceptual and analytic scope and, more importantly, leads to an impoverished view of human activity. To establish this point, researchers have demonstrated the presence of rich learning as students participate in a variety of informal settings (cf., Nasir & Hand, 2004; Taylor, 2011). Likewise, researchers have shown how students and teachers mutually construct activity and ways of knowing (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010).

Learning in communities of practice

Appendix A
The social dimensions of activity lend special significance to communities and their practices. As Etienne Wenger (2000) explains, “Participation … refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to those communities” (italics in original; p. 210). Thus, Wenger links who-we-are and what-we-do to communities of practice, or who-we-do-them-with. He goes on to suggest that this creates a sense of belonging in individuals and affects how they understand their experiences.

Wenger refers to social groups as ‘communities of practice’ to indicate that ‘practice’ is what lends community its character. A bird’s-eye-view of communities reveals their ‘wholeness’ or cohesiveness—their unique identities—to be constructions formed and re-formed by the practices of their members. Furthermore, he maintains that community, like learning and teaching, is ubiquitous. In his words:

Communities of practice are an integral part of our daily lives. They are so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons they are also quite familiar. Although the term may be new, the experience is not. (pp. 212-213)

Wenger also observes that that participation may look different depending on the conditions of a given situation or moment and what’s at stake. In fact, he observes that it is the big learning moments we tend to remember. Metaphorically, he notes how “[t]he events of learning we can point to are perhaps more like volcanic eruptions whose fiery bursts reveal for one dramatic moment the ongoing labor of the earth.” Even so, he continues by observing that “[l]earning is something we can assume – whether we see it or not, whether we like the way it goes or not, whether what we are learning is to repeat the past or to shake it off” (p. 214).
A crucial implication of this view of learning is that ‘failures’ of learning cannot be traced solely to individuals or communities, students or teachers, but are instances of ‘misalignment’ between the languages used to describe and interpret participation in a given situation. Wenger thus gives special significance to vocabulary since it is conceptual language that orients us to the world. As he explains, “We pay attention to what we expect to see, we hear what we can place in our understanding, and we act according to our worldviews” (p. 214). Some have taken this to mean that educators should attend to language more explicitly in their instruction with the goal of bringing students into specific discourses, like science (Herrenkohl & Guerra, 1998; Herrenkohl et al., 1999; Lee & Fradd, 1998). Others have argued that language certainly matters, but discourses are inherently political and educators should take care to avoid indoctrinating students into particular discourses, such as the language of science, regardless of their prominence (Bang & Medin, 2010; Barton, 1998).

As Wenger frames it, the way to change our actions is to change our understandings and worldviews. Since our participation in communities of practice forms those views, presumably we change them by changing communities. But what would be our motivation? Why change actions, worldviews, and communities? If we are driven to participate in community by a desire to belong, then what drives us to belong to other communities? Also, what are we to make of the joys and difficulties of our lived experiences within diverse communities—of sharing our views and enacting certain practices in the company of others? Such questions suggest a richness and complexity in social activity that warrants further consideration.

Learning as ontological and motivated by desire

Martin Packer (2001) finds much value in a sociocultural, situated view of learning. Even so, he is concerned that sociocultural theorists haven’t fully acknowledged the ontological
implications of their framework. He argues that cognitive constructivism, despite its limitations, at least gives individuals integrity of ‘self’, or a sense of uniqueness and ‘self’ portability across domains of human activity. Following the postmodern tendency to critique and dismantle human structures and forms, Packer notes how sociocultural theorists have dissolved the self by reifying context and ‘distributing’ knowledge across social and material settings. The result is the replacement of the cognitive constructivist’s rather abstract notion that humans are walking minds with the equally abstract notion that humans are formless shape-shifters. Thus, Packer asks of sociocultural theory, “[D]oes anything remain personal (p. 500)?” He goes on to wonder,

Is the sociocultural perspective this “new form” of knowledge in which man disappears, an unneeded epiphenomenon? Or can we still say that a person does in some way endure from setting to setting; that when learning occurs something changes in the person qua person, not only in the person’s participation as member of a specific community of practice? (p. 501)

Packer maintains that sociocultural theory inadvertently characterizes an ontological vision of individual persons. But it is more than an insignia, or badge of membership as individuals increase their participation in communities of practice. Together with Jessie Goicoechea (2000) he proposes that “[t]he self is not a purely cognitive construction, let alone the transparent source of action and cognition; it is formed in desire, conflict, and opposition, in a struggle for recognition” (p. 233).

In its entirety, the ontological vision Packer & Goicoechea offer consists of six components: “a) The person is constructed b) in a social context c) formed through practical activity and d) in relationships of recognition and desire e) that can split the person f) thereby motivating the search for identity” (p. 228). The first three components echo Lave & Wenger’s
situated theory of learning. But Packer & Goicoechea extend this theory by delving into Lave & Wenger’s suggestion that activity engages individuals’ intentions and forms their identities. They argue that, as stated, situated theory tends to assign too much significance to communities in the construction and formation of identity. Individual agency is therefore reduced to a matter of choosing whether or not to socially conform by doing what others do.

Often missing is the emotional experience of being recognized by others. Packer & Goicoechea note that wanting to be seen constitutes a desire, and this “desire directed toward another person … seeks recognition that gives not just consciousness of self but self-consciousness” (p. 233). As such, individuals gain more than senses of inclusion and individuation when participating in community; they also develop a sense of who they are as an individual relative to other members and communities.

Indeed, individuals usually participate in multiple communities, and this has profound consequences on their identities. Packer & Goicoechea observe how the desire for recognition within multiple communities leaves individuals feeling split and incomplete as their ‘selves’ are distributed across various domains of social practice. Acceptable behavior in one community may be taboo in another. They thus suggest that the inability to be all of one’s ‘self’ in any given situation results in the desire for personal integrity, or the “attempt to overcome division and achieve wholeness, unity—to become self-same” (p. 234). This assertion may be a bit extreme, however, as it seems possible that a person could be comfortable with expressing themselves differently within different communities and not necessarily desire “wholeness” or perceive a lack of “wholeness” as a problem. Even so, when individuals do have a desire for “wholeness,” Packer & Goicoechea argue that such a desire competes with the desire for social acceptance, resulting in a struggle within and between individuals. Situated theory tends to assume a stable
and unproblematic conception of community, but Packer & Goicoechea point out that communities are complicated and rife with conflict as members exert pressure on one another and the norms of participation. They observe how people are always pushing beyond the identity conferred by a community of practice. People actively strive to come to terms with the practices of their community, adopting an attitude, taking a stand on the way membership of a community has positioned them. As they do this their activity acts on that community, reproducing it or transforming it. (p. 234)

The quest for identity drives individuals to act in certain ways that, intended or not, shape the community and how it recognizes its members. Learning is therefore more than simply a matter of changing states of mind or forms of participation; it is an interweaving between the evolving transformation of the self and a world in flux, an unending pursuit by individuals to fulfill their visceral and embodied experiences of desire.

Packer & Goicoechea maintain that our capacities to think and reason have evolved as mechanisms for controlling and justifying our pursuits of desire, and we must learn these capacities. As such, they note that the “cognizing individual and the inner realm of mind are not natural, they are both human products, the bittersweet fruit of particular social arrangements” (p. 235). Our minds and sense of an inner self thus form within communities and the persistent push and pull of individuals working to shape and reshape social conditions to fulfill their desires. Constructive cognitivists treat these conditions and the attending mental constructs as if they were mutually exclusive. And they treat the constructs as if they were natural, the realization of inevitable and inherent states of mental development. In this view, the identity that an individual constructs is contingent on his current mental state; understanding the individual’s state is crucial.
for understanding his identity. Packer & Goicoechea accept the premise that identities are constructed, but they are critical of the notion that such construction is bounded by rules governed by inherent and evolving mental states.

Packer (2001) calls the sociocultural ontology non-dualist because it rejects Descartes’ maxim “I think, therefore I am” and reconnects the body and heart to the mind. By doing so, an ontological theory of learning emerges in which transformations of self entail more than changes in meaning-making; they also entail transformation in how we act and feel. Individuals yearn to find a coherent identity, and they construct and assess the meaning of social activities against an idealized and unrealized self. Desire thus adds a key ingredient to situated learning theory that coheres the products of social activity into a portable and transforming self for individual actors—a self that, given its relative uniqueness, never really feels whole. This uneasy sense of incompleteness then drives individuals’ lifelong desire to belong—to find a community in which they feel truly seen as they see themselves. Articulating the lasting power of this desire, Kegan (1982) states, “The need to be seen, to be recognized, however it changes in the complexity of its form, may never change in its intensity” (p. 18).

The desire to belong and be recognized by others in a positive and self-affirming way is compelling. But there are other desires that drive individuals to act and pursue various goals that range from the grandiose (the desire for world peace) to the everyday (the desire to see one’s children when school gets out). There are also the matters of how desire is learned, its relationship to activity, and its role in shaping identities and communities that bear further articulation.

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Appendix A
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1 Of course, not all learning is the same since not all forms of practice are the same. Specific forms of learning addressing unique venues of social activity, like teaching, can arguably be isolated and targeted for investigation and promotion as lifelong activities (cf., Hammerness et al., 2007).

2 This phenomenon has been taken up by researchers interested in adult transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990) and the significant life experiences of children (Chawla, 1998).

3 This is why I am not referring to the transformative learning theory espoused by Jack Mezirow (2000), who defines transformative learning as “the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives)” (p. 92). Besides the cognitive framing, this theory assumes an adult-specific form of learning (Taylor, 2007) that I want to avoid.

4 I am not arguing that wholeness is achievable, only that it is desired. This desire develops in a social context wherein individuals come to feel fractured, split, or not whole.
Appendix B. Interview protocols for CTP and MONT

CTP Protocols

Interview #1 – CTP

1. Why did you choose to become a teacher?
   a. How would you describe your experience as a K-12 student?
2. Why did you choose the program?
3. How would you describe your experience in the program so far?
   a. What do you like best about the program?
   b. What do you like least about the program?
   c. What is your relationship like with your peers?
4. How would you describe your relationship with your mentor teacher?
5. How would you describe your experience teaching so far?
   a. What does a good day in the classroom look like for you?
   b. What does a bad day in the classroom look like for you?
6. What are two or three goals you have for yourself as a teacher?
   a. What teaching practices are you hoping to get better at?
   b. What do you hope to get out of the program?
7. So far as you can tell, what are the program’s expectations for you?

Interview #2 – CTP

1. First, as a general gauge of your experience, I want to know what is currently on your mind regarding the program?
2. How do feel about the forthcoming job interviews?
   a. How would you assess your prospects of getting a job?
3. What do you make of your Philosophy of Education statement?
   a. How has it been writing it?
4. Where does academic rigor figure into your teaching this semester?
   a. What do you make of the use of academic standards in your classroom?
5. At this point in the program, what do you wish you knew more about?
   a. Why does that knowledge matter to you?
6. What are you most looking forward to about teaching within your own classroom?
   a. What did you take away from your recent teaching rotations that seemed useful to you?
7. Questions for individual beginners:
   a. James:
      i. The other day you mentioned liking the central location of your classroom? I’m curious to know why this matters to you.
      ii. How would you handle it if, next year, you were placed in a portable classroom?
   b. Elizabeth:

Appendix C
i. Not long ago in seminar I overheard you say that it grates on you when people refer to students as “the lows”. Why does this grate on you?

c. Kelsey:
   i. The other day I overheard you teasing Mark and Ben about not including you in the brewery outing. This had me wondering about your collegial relationships, and wanted to get more of your impression of the relationship you have to the other Downtown Elementary CTP beginners.
   ii. You also mentioned that you think your mentor is “awesome”. What do you find “awesome” about her?

d. Mark:
   i. The other day you indicated a “ranking”. Tell me more about this.
   ii. Are you concerned at all about how you compare to your peers?
   iii. While observing you I noticed that you spent a lot of time correcting misbehavior, and I’ve heard you commiserating with Ben and Kelsey about student behavior several times. Is it fair to say that this behavior issue is getting to you? How do you reconcile it with your expressed interest, from your POE, to build supportive and productive relationships with students?
   iv. I’m curious about where you find joy in the classroom.

e. Ben:
   i. After visiting your classroom I told you that your room seemed warmer than Marks. How do he see Mark’s experience comparing to your own?
   ii. Also, you often seem so positive and upbeat, I’m wondering what worries you have, if any, about teaching, Do you have any doubts?

f. Dawn:
   i. As someone who appears competent, is it fair to assume that you enjoy the work?
   ii. How do you feel about the classroom management practices?
   iii. What about your teaching is on your mind at this point in the program?

g. Sarah:
   i. While observing you teach I noted how comfortable you seemed—in control of the classroom. But you also seemed somewhat bored. Is this a fair characterization?
   ii. Also, when a student misbehaved you said, “That’s really hard to deal with today.” That had me wondering if there was something unusual about that day for you. Or was it a typical day?

Interview #3 – CTP

1. Tell me about the interviews you have had for positions in the district.
   a. Any positive or negative highlights?
   b. Were the experiences what you expected?
   c. Was there anything that surprised you?

2. What did you make of the review meeting from your spring lead teach?
   a. Was it what you expected?
3. Generally, what kinds of feedback have you found more or less valuable in the program?
4. Generally, what moments from your year in the classroom stand out for you, if any?
5. What are you most looking forward to about teaching within your own classroom?
6. What do you think it takes to be successful at CTP?
7. Do you see yourself as a leader?

MONT Protocols

Interview #1 – MONT

1. Why did you choose to become a teacher?
   a. Describe your experiences as a K-12 student.
   b. How about a favorite teacher.
2. What kinds of teaching experiences did you have prior to starting the program?
3. Why did you choose to attend the MONT program?
   a. If it doesn’t come up, ask them to describe non-Montessori or “traditional” teaching and classrooms.
4. How would you describe your experience in the program so far?
   a. What do you like best about the program?
   b. What do you like least about the program?
   c. What is your relationship like with your peers?
5. What are two or three goals you have for yourself as a teacher?
   a. What teaching practices are you hoping to get better at?
   b. What do you hope to get out of the program?
6. So far as you can tell, what are the program’s expectations for you?

Interview #2 – MONT

1. As the school year gets under way, what’s on your mind right now? How are things feeling for you?
2. Looking back on the summer, how would you describe the experience?
   a. What stands out the most from the summer experience?
   b. What do you miss?
3. How do you feel about the upcoming math assessments in November?
4. How has your classroom experience been thus far? Is it what you expected?
5. What do you most enjoy about teaching thus far? What do you like the least?
6. How would you characterize your relationship with your colleagues/mentor?
7. Have you been formally observed yet? If so, how was the experience?
   a. Have you received feedback on your teaching yet? If so, and if you don’t mind sharing, what feedback did you receive?
   b. Was it reasonable?
8. What are two or three goals you have for yourself as a teacher?
   a. What teaching practices are you hoping to get better at?
b. What do you hope to get out of the program?
9. What are your plans beyond this year?
10. Generally, how would you describe the typical Montessori teacher?
   a. In other words, what does it take to complete the MONT program and teach in Montessori schools?
   b. What are heads of school looking for when hiring Montessori teachers?
11. Do you consider yourself a leader?
Appendix C. Memo on language of desire or expressing desire in discourse

Guiding question: Where might we look for evidence of desire in common discourse?

Theoretically, the beginners’ desires were forming all of the time through their activity in and out of their respective programs. Yet empirically identifying signs of this formation and what was desired posed a challenge given the likelihood of rules (Meanwell & Kleiner, 2014; Zembylas, 2005) for public expression of emotion and desire. And indeed, emotional expression was less commonly observed during seminars than in individual interviews where intimacy and emotional candor was expected (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). At seminars, social celebrations such as potlucks (CTP) and breaks contained more signs of affect, though often about personal matters (e.g., upcoming parties, family life, etc.) not always related to official program business. There were however built-in opportunities for beginners to express their emotions, including the weekly habit-of-mind discussions and temperature checks at CTP and the morning poems at MONT. On rare occasions during seminars normal discourse was punctuated by emotionally charged discussions, sometimes tangential to the topic or activity, which afforded insights into personal views, concerns, and what was desired. These moments of overt emotionality caught my attention, though the real challenge was discerning the presence of desire within the discourse. I was thus on the lookout for expressed terms that could reasonably be interpreted as communicating desire. Examining these expressions provided insights into desire and how it surfaces in our language.

Expressions of “desire” and “wishing”

The term “desire” was rarely encountered in either program. In the interview transcripts “desire” was mentioned only once: in our first interview Mark explained the kinds of people CTP went after by stating, “So what they did is find all these people with this tremendous
passion to do something and most of us did not have an education background … They have a real desire to have a job that has that internal fulfillment. Which is another component of why I wanted to switch [careers], too.” His qualification of the passion as “tremendous” may suggest the emotional potency communicated by the term “desire”—a connection to the intimately “internal” aspects of who we are and the pull it exert on our lives. Like a curse word that carries emotional heft, desire may be too much for use in civil conversation. Indeed, in many hours of observing seminars at both programs I only noted its presence six times at CTP and seven times at MONT. More often than not it was written on a slide as part of a quote, poem, or instructional text. Even in these few, brief instances though it is possible to discern some conceptual features and suggestive sketches of programmatic differences.

At CTP desire came up mostly in relation to addressing preferred learning outcomes. For example, while learning about backwards design for lesson planning CTP beginners were instructed on a slide to “Identify desired results.” Later they read a passage from Stephen Farr’s book *Teaching as Leadership* (2010) similarly informing them that “highly effective teachers commit to and work toward achieving desired results” (p. 145). The same text then stated that “effective execution is driven by … an intense desire to broaden opportunities for children who have been unjustly deprived of them”, thereby linking a commitment to getting results, presumably test scores, to a broader desire for students’ economic well-being (p. 146). The qualifier of “intense” suggests the importance of desire’s strength, which also came up in a quote by Bill Cosby that served as a habit-of-mind prompt during a seminar: “In order to succeed, your desire for success should be greater than your fear of failure.” The only specific mention of “desire” outside of these texts occurred when an instructor emphasized the importance of teachers modeling a learner mindset by stating, “We have this desire to want to
learn by watching others.” At MONT, wanting to learn also came up during a presentation as two beginners highlighted Jerome Bruner’s suggestion that students need to “desire” to learn for real learning to occur. Nancy also used the term three times in her classroom leadership course. The first time started with her stating, “So what do we believe as Montessorians? Well, as Montessorians we believe that children are inherently good and that they truly, truly wish to do as asked.” Restating this belief she told the group that children “are inherently good and desire to do as asked.” In another lecture she cautioned them against burnout, noting, “Many of us in this field have such a burning desire for things to be perfect for the children [that] we sometimes will unduly sacrifice these things to work for the children.” Finally, during a discussion about the discomfort of giving constructive feedback Nancy mentioned how “some of us are so desirous of avoiding conflict” that we let things go, which makes them harder to address later.

These instances offer some suggestive first strokes in the larger portraits of desire as constructed at each program. At CTP there is the expectation for how effective teachers should experience a desire to teach—“intensely.” We also get a sense of what they should desire: at CTP we get the impression that teachers should desire to get results and succeed for the sake of children’s opportunities; at MONT we get a similar impression that teachers should be driven to impact children’s lives, though it is a desire directed at establishing the “perfect” environment for Montessori’s vision of self-directed learning. Also raised is the notion that teachers must account for students’ desire to learn through their pedagogy.

One final instance where “desire” was explicitly addressed reveals much about its conceptual contours. Midway through the summer MONT beginners were entreated to a discussion of desire through one of their daily poems—a piece by Alice Walker aptly titled “Desire.” Unfortunately I was not present for the beginners’ discussion of the poem, which many
of them said was powerful. Yet even without their comments and interpretations I find the poem instructive of the concept. In a few short lines Walker manages to articulate the transformative nature of desire as the lingering remnants of older desires are swept from her heart, leaving a space where new desires take root and grow. Significantly, Walker reveals how a chain of desires—wanting immersion, wanting to shake the broom, wanting to grow something—lead to this seemingly impossible occurrence of a new heart growing into devotion. She also suggests that desire itself can be an object pursued for survival or that we might pursue opportunities to desire in certain ways. Mark suggests as much when mentioning that he and his CTP peers sought “internal fulfillment” through a profession that they hoped would enable them to grow a certain kind of heart, one devoted to worthwhile and personally enriching outcomes.

These few explicit uses of “desire” serve to illustrate that a language of desire communicates emotion directed toward realizing or fulfilling an object. But more discursive clues were needed to round out the concept and appreciate its presence in the observed programs. Terms like “longing” or “yearning” (e.g., “I long…” or “I yearn…”) were absent from the data. There were, however, a few expressions of “wishing”. For example, Nancy’s use of desire was initially prompted by her expressed belief that children “wish to do as asked.” Indeed, the term “wish” is a close analog of “desire”, as wishing for something similarly communicates a person’s object-directed emotion. By late winter beginners at CTP looked anxiously to the following year, and I overheard a beginner state to a peer, “I just wish I knew what school I was going to be at.” They also were considered who they wanted to be as teachers, and at one point Jason (instructor) asked them consider, “What are the values you wish to live by?” At MONT a major concern was Montessori’s lack of influence in education policy. After noting how it had not reached enough

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minorities and urban students, Paula (instructor) said to the group, “I just wish we could spread it.”

Besides these few expressions of “desire” and “wishing” there were other terms suggestive of desire. In the quote above Mark refers to “passion” in conjunction with desire; he also talks of “wanting” to switch careers, and Walker uses the phrase “I want” in her poem. Many mentions of “wanting” and “passion” were evident in the data, as were expressions of “looking forward to”, “needing”, “feeling”, and “loving”.

Expressions of “looking forward to” suggest desired futures

The expression “looking forward to” first came to my attention during a “temperature check” at a CTP seminar. Referring to the forthcoming fall solo teach event, Kyle (instructor) asked, “What are you most excited about?” Beginners responded by describing how they were “looking forward to” consistency, having control, implementing lessons, and incorporating more classroom structure. Taken literally the phrase suggests using one’s imagination to gaze “forward” and anticipate a possible and expected future. But as these responses show, we use the expression as a way of communicating affect about that future—to convey how our thinking about it makes us feel more or less “excited”. This can be seen during another “temperature check” where Jason (instructor) asked a group of beginners what they were “looking forward to” in the second half of the program. Beginners responded:

“I’m just looking forward to … starting to prepare for the interview process…”

“I’m looking forward to the job search process … I’m excited to figure out where I might end up.”

“I’m really looking forward to finding out where I’m going to work next year.”
“I’m looking forward to kind of taking those steps towards where I’m going to be next year.”

“I’m really looking forward to improving and growing and finding out where I’m going to be next year.”

“I’m looking forward to getting even better.”

“I felt like everything was stagnant for me [last fall]. So I’m looking forward to getting back into it.”

“I’m looking forward to … seeing the kids grow by leaps and bounds.”

The responses to Kyle’s “check” were limited to the forthcoming teaching event. That moment having passed, these responses appeared to reflect the ongoing concern of getting hired and getting better.

These comments were brief and, while I could infer the underlying motives for their emotional connections to particular futures, I wanted to know more about how individuals constructed their respective narratives of professional progress. I therefore included a question in the second interview asking what interviewees were “looking forward to” in their programs. Their responses show how the forward gaze is often preoccupied with the more immediate future because imagining the distant future depends on how current stressors will be resolved. For example, Kate (MONT) looked to the near future for clues about how her career would unfold. Three months into teaching she was desperate to have her classroom “feel normal” and told me, “I’m looking forward to either that or moving on to something else.” Dawn’s career prospects were less daunting but uncertainty similarly made it difficult for her to imagine too far into her future. Responding to my questions, she explained how she was “looking forward to having a
commitment” from a school because she was eager to start envisioning her classroom and how she would implement the many ideas she had for teaching.

Kelsey admitted to being under a lot of stress and said that she “looked forward” to completing the program, which was paramount in her mind before she looked ahead to teaching the following year. When I asked Sarah if she “looked forward” to graduating from CTP, she responded:

Yes and no. I'm looking forward to … being done with the coursework even though I find value in a lot of it. And I'm looking forward to having my own classroom. But, I'm also really scared. … Next year, we're just gonna be that first-year teacher that's messing up and getting under people's feet and we won't have the excuse [of being pre-service teachers], you know?

Her admitted fear of having her own classroom may reveal why, with so much to worry about already at CTP, she and the other beginners seemed hesitant to imagine themselves as fully licensed teachers responsible for their own classrooms. Even in her third interview Sarah still expressed a mixture of emotions about teaching the following year:

I'm really excited for next year. I'm really nervous, but—I mean, not really nervous. I feel like I should be more nervous than I am. And I know that'll come. It still seems so far away is why.

Thinking about next year evokes the emotions, though she acknowledges that the emotional force is likely coming but the event seems too far in the future for the nervousness to linger long.

James was an exception and seemed to embrace imaginative possibilities. He expressed optimism about his future and had far-reaching visions for his professional career:
I'm type A, competitive. So, I'm looking forward to being the best special education teacher in this program and going above and beyond in terms of reading and asking questions that challenge the admin in the program. And building a name for myself in [the district]. Because, like I said, I don't want to just be a teacher. I am so frustrated by the systems that I want to go on and do amazing things.

James frames what he looks forward to in the near future to a larger desire to alleviate his frustrations with schooling by leaving teaching “to go on and do amazing things.” By contrast, Justine at MONT seems content to stay in the classroom:

I'm starting to see what it's like to enjoy going to work every day, which is really nice. Because, I don't honestly remember ever looking forward to getting up in the morning and going to work. I always did it because I had to, but I never enjoyed it.

Her comment was in response to my having asked her how her practicum teaching was going, not what she looked forward to. But her use of the expression to frame her daily emotional state as positive offered an insightful comparison to the many examples where beginners looked forward to the alleviation of their stresses, uncertainties, and frustrations.

*Expressions of “want” and the intensity and breadth of desire*

Expressions of “want” came up frequently, with instructors and beginners frequently expressing personal wants (“I want”), other’s wants (“she wants” or “they want”), and the wants of a group associated with the speaker (“we want”). Some of these expressions seemed relatively benign and limited in scope, such as wanting to get lunch or go for a walk over break, while others seemed to convey greater emotionality directed toward distant visions. Indeed, the numerous expressions of “want” varied in discernible intensity and were directed at objects of greater and lesser breadth. By intensity I am referring to how preoccupied a person appeared to
be with a given object. As I use it here, breadth refers to the relative scope and attainability of an object from a desiring subject. Objects of less breadth could still elicit intense desire, such as wanting to succeed at an impending teaching event. Likewise, objects of greater breadth such as wanting all of one’s students to get into college, though important to an individual, could be felt less intensely in a given moment.

Both the intensity and breadth of an expressed “want” must be inferred from contextual clues and aggregated cases. For example, during a CTP seminar Susan (instructor) told beginners that they could not submit reports in the first person, stating, “We really want it to be an academic paper.” It seemed unlikely that Susan would lose much sleep perseverating over pronoun use in students’ papers. What can be reasonably inferred is that she desired a certain product. However, more information, perhaps through an interview, would be needed to understand how intensely she desired well-formatted papers. Also, additional evidence would be needed to infer how her wanting might reflect a desire for a larger, more encompassing object such as professionalism or program integrity.

The expressions of “want” that tended to catch my attention were those that communicated greater intensity and/or breadth, which sent strong signals about what mattered most to the programs and beginners. Some of these expressions framed programmatic ideals. For example, Nancy (Classroom Leadership instructor) stressed the Montessori view of grades by stating firmly,

At a certain point grades can become the thing that children work for. And that's not what we want. Work is it's own reward. There's joy in the learning. That's what we want.

This objective of intrinsically motivated students was raised many times at MONT and was important to Nancy; it wasn’t the first time that she had mentioned a dislike of grades or how
Montessorians want students to take pleasure in classroom work. And though not as far reaching in breadth as the Montessori goal of world peace, this objective seemed arguably more distant for the beginners than the immediate demands of completing course assignments or even setting up quality classroom spaces in the coming August.

Other notable expressions of “wanting” were directed toward becoming a type of teacher. In one instance Tyler at MONT expressed thankfulness for the conversation the group was having about professional priorities by saying, “I really crave this… the knowledge that people are more important than the things you want to accomplish…” She then provided a quote about the sun doing so many things yet still having time to ripen grapes as if it had nothing better to do. “That’s the kind of teacher I want to be”, she informed the group, explaining that such a teacher could attend to so much yet still be present for a child. Mark at CTP similarly described the “kind of teacher” he wanted to be, though for him the moment of realization occurred after seeing his mentor teacher execute behavior management:

And it's just this beautiful thing, because when she goes through it it's like—like as I was watching I was like, Damn! [points firmly] That is what I want to be!

The emphatic language punctuated by the pointing gesture suggested Mark’s strong desire to teach like his mentor, an interpretation supported by similar expression he had made during interviews. It is worth noting, though, that Mark tended to be an enthusiastic speaker and admitted to being a comfortable and affable talker. He wore his heart on his sleeve, so to speak, which could be taken as a sign of his having more robust or intensely felt desires than his peers. But it seems more likely that Mark was less encumbered by the rules of emotionality than others and chose to express his emotions in situations where others might have kept silent. It could therefore be possible for others to have intensely felt desires that were not as visible. Unlike

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“desire”, the term “want” seemed to afford greater latitude for expressing desires in a socially acceptable way.

Expressed “needs” as directing attention toward valued objects

The term “need” was also more commonly used than “desire” and revealed an intriguing aspect of how objects of desire are constructed in the imagination. As with “want”, expressions of “need” are seemingly benign in certain situations, such as when Sarah, a beginner at CTP, replied to a peer’s editing suggestion by saying, “I really need to add that.” But even in such instances “need” seemed to convey a stronger degree of emotional investment in an object owing to its perceived significance for the subject considered “in need” of it.

Needs tend to be treated as more important than wants. This may be due to the extreme interpretation of a “need” as something required for survival (i.e., water, food, etc.), which renders “wants” as unnecessary or indulgent. Though the implications are less severe, in teaching this distinction between “wants” and “needs” is drawn to elevate the importance of student needs above teachers’ wants so teachers stay focused on what children need to know. Framing this distinction for CTP beginners, Lauren (instructor) compared “nice to knows” to “need to knows” with an example of a popular monarch butterfly unit that, for her, seemed like “a lot of time on something that’s ‘nice to know’.” I understood her point, though I admit that her example rubbed me the wrong way given the threat humans pose to the migrant monarch. Desiring a world with monarchs, I might construct such a unit as a ‘need to know’ for both students and butterflies. This disagreement in what qualifies as a “need” reveals the concept’s constructed nature: to define a need is in effect to settle the subject-object tension by imbuing the object with special importance to the subject, thus rendering it as something so crucial that a desire for it is
justified. The following quote from my first interview with Alex, a beginner at MONT, reveals this construction:

I love to be outside, I've lived in national parks. That's just so important to me, personally, and I think it's important for children also. And I know that most of them like to be outside and to explore, so it goes hand in hand. And it just reiterates how important nature is and how we need to appreciate that and respect it. (italics mine)

She begins with a statement of personal affection for being outside derived from personal experience and then identifies a similar preference that she “knows” children exhibit. She then pivots to the importance of the object—nature—and justifies the desire to be outside as serving an overarching need for environmental appreciation and respect.

Lauren and Alex’s comments illustrate the sense of imperative communicated by framing an action or outcome as needed rather than merely desired. The focus is drawn to the object, though desire is still arguably present and important to acknowledge. Indeed, pitting needs against desires may downplay the role of the wanting subject in the subject-object dynamic. This could be problematic for teachers, who work in a caring profession where the needs of the cared-for (students) are prioritized over those of their caregivers (Cohen, 2005; Noddings, 1988). Such an expectation makes it seem selfish for teachers to express what they want of their work. It may also stunt the imagination for what teaching can accomplish. Vincent Miller (2004) contends that reifying needs often leads to a pragmatic dismissal of desiring as foolishly romanticism, which in turn yields a general disregard for more grandiose desires for social justice or the grace of God as hopelessly idealistic. With nobody desiring them, it is hard to imagine how they will ever be realized. A rhetoric of “student needs” that limits discussion or debate on those needs similarly risks alienating those teachers who dream big about their work or question the imperative of
certain objectives. A major aim of this study was to take seriously those dreams and challenges, so while I took note of expressed needs, I did not consider them to be more important than expressed wants. Rather, I treated them as efforts to direct attention to and justify certain desires.

*Expressions of “feeling” as indicators of emotion but not necessarily desire*

Expressions of feeling (e.g., “I feel…”) were common and suggested that certain objects or situations affected individuals’ emotional states, though this inference wasn’t always clear. In some instances these expressed feelings appeared to be steering individuals toward or away from particular teaching contexts, and several individuals mentioned “the feel” of entering particular school setting. For example, Ben, from CTP, described the shock of transitioning from camp counseling in the northeast to teaching at his practicum school by stating, “And so that was a very different feel to go from Vermont to urban education.” In an email filling me in on his new mentor teacher, Mark wrote, “I feel really good about her, in that I want to have a room like hers when the fall rolls around.” A recurring theme at MONT was the good “feel” of the Montessori approach. When I asked Alex what “sold” her about Montessori she replied, “Honestly, the feel in the classroom, it was just comfortable and relaxed, but the children were free, but it was totally contained and productive.” David from MONT had taught for several years in a “traditional” classroom, which he contrasted to teaching in a Montessori classroom by stating:

> It already feels different. The whole Montessori philosophy for me is just … so much more calming, so much more fulfilling… There's so much more depth to it… We're trying to get this, I guess, for lack of a better word, a Montessori feel and culture within our school, where, yes, we understand there's an achievement gap, but my principal always says, ‘Urgency without panic. That's what I want.’
In our second interview he continued this contrast by discussing how feeling pressured established a desire for a different teaching goal:

And that's, I think, the pressure that teachers feel. At the end of the day, I think almost all the teachers that I've worked with, and even myself, all that matters is that end-of-year goal. That is all that I care about, because that's what's gonna reflect my practice. And it shouldn't be that way. It should be my interactions with children, the way they feel in my classroom.

David refers to “all of the teachers” and the existence of a common feeling about the work, thus enjoining his narrative to a collective story about teaching in public school settings. He thus suggests that we co-construct our affective narratives because there is a comfort in having one’s feelings affirmed by those feeling something similar. And through this co-construction our feelings can take shape. As Alex explained of her time working in the national parks, “I think that probably helped with my love for nature … the people around me … having that same feeling.”

In his comment, David also mentions how teachers can affect how students feel. According to Ben these feelings can stir teachers’ emotions. During our first interview he said that, for him, “being able to feel [students’] sense of failure when they're ten years old and [to] just feel how beaten down they are is just terrible…” He considered it “really powerful” to be in a position to “fix” those feelings. Likewise, during our first interview Carol at MONT described an emotional experience that led her into teaching:

I was starting to help the 6th grade cousin with her math homework. And I was like, “Oh my gosh, she understands me! I really like the material, and I feel like I'm actually helping her.”
These comments suggest that the beginning teachers wanted to feel good about how they impacted their students.

Beginners also wanted to feel good about their progress in the program, especially at CTP where a lot rested on improving performance. Midway through the program, while cautioning the beginners against getting cocky, Lauren said, “[It] has happened in the past where people feel like they have arrived since now they’ve been six months in.” By saying “feel like” instead of “think” Lauren acknowledges that the sense of having “arrived” would be just that, a felt impression rather than a fully reasoned fact. Fearful that she did not have this impression of her teaching, a beginner stated, “I guess I don't feel like I'm anywhere near that.” Several beginners then offered similar impressions and expressed feelings of discomfort and uncertainty about their teaching.

Using the expression “I feel” to give an impression suggests that communicating emotionality isn’t always the goal. Sometime the speaker wants to communicate uncertain thoughts or personally held beliefs. For example, at one point Tyler asked her instructor, “Did Montessori believe that all people find work satisfying in and of itself? Because I feel like one of the reasons that communism doesn't work out very well is because people start to realize that they're going to get the same thing no matter how hard they work and have a propensity to work less.” Her usage of "feel" seems akin to saying "I think" or "I thought" or "I have heard that" rather than a declaration of her affective state. And it conveys some hesitation and perhaps an invitation for someone to respond and affirm or refute the reason she puts forth. The same seems true of this statement by Mark: “I didn't feel like my Spanish would have been enough to be able to really get into a classroom and make a difference.” As well as with this statement by Ryan: “I feel that CTP is directed toward a certain group of individuals, or they have a specific type of
teacher in mind.” The meaning of both statements would be the same if “feel” was exchanged for “think”. Also, Mark was not claiming to know that his Spanish was insufficient, only that he believed this was likely. And Ryan was only communicating his personal impression of CTP’s ideal type of teacher candidate.

This use of “feel” was especially common in the interviews as beginners framed their responses in terms of their understandings of the truth of a given situation or narrative. It served as a disclaimer that what followed merely reflected the perspective of the speaker and should not be taken as the whole truth. To get closer at that truth required multiple, overlapping impressions. Likewise, those expressions of “feeling” that could reasonably be interpreted as conveying aspects of an affective narrative were still insufficient to fully discern the object-directed form of emotion associated with desire. The most that could be said was that a speaker was signaling an emotional response to something; whether or not they desired it required something more, such as when David mentioned that the “feeling” of calm he got from Montessori was what he wanted.

*Expressions of “passion” and “love” indicate object-directed emotionality but not desire*

Expressions of “passion” and “love” tended to communicate a heartfelt emotional state directed toward a particular object (e.g., “I am passionate about children” or “I love to be outside.”). Being passionate or loving something seemed worthwhile and desirable. During the last CTP seminar a program administrator complimented a beginner’s presentation of his teaching by declaring, “You’re so passionate!” Several beginners referred to a passionate person or wish to find a passion as a reason for entering teaching. During our first interview Ben credited a “passionate” teacher education professor for his choice to pursue teaching. Elizabeth mentioned how her dad wasn’t “passionate” about his line of work and encouraged her to find a
career path that moved her. And Tara indicated wanting to be like her mom, who runs a Montessori school, by saying, “I've never seen someone so passionate about a school, and about the people in the school, and just about what benefits everyone.”

Expressions of love were directed at a number of things, including teaching environments, classroom moments, concepts, and instructional practices. During a CTP “temperature check” session one person exclaimed, “I love the classroom that I’m in now.” Ben looked forward to working in the school where he was hired by stating, “I love the school. I love the principal.” David noted how he enjoyed morning circle time, explaining to me, “I love it, we sing, we dance...” Talking about debriefing her first solo teaching event with her mentor teacher, Dawn said, “I love receiving feedback.”

Beginners often explained how their “passion” or “love” for teaching came about through past experiences working with children and certain student populations. Ben at CTP described how a series of opportunities to work with children developed into a love for this work:

I would coach football and I really liked that and then I did some coaching for baseball as well in the summer and I loved that and I loved working with the kids so I started taking some classes in Teacher Ed and I loved it there. [Ben_int1]

Dawn was also moved by an earlier experience with children and told me, “I always loved the idea of teaching and have worked with children in special needs all through high school and I loved that.” Elizabeth described how she “loved” her time assisting children with special needs. David at MONT explained how he chose to work in Title I schools to meet the needs of underserved students, explaining to me, “So, students coming from poverty, students of color, that's been my passion.” And Sarah at CTP similarly described how she though it made sense to
apply her youthful “energy and passion” to serving marginalized students. “If I’m gonna teach],” she told me, “I might as well go where I’m needed.”

Some beginners mentioned the importance of finding a teaching community that shared their passion for the work. Carol discussed how a “sense of community” speaks to her, and she is finding it at her Montessori school. “I love how everyone is so passionate”, she explained, “and we have so many things in common … It clicks.” Tara described her MONT peers as “so driven to the same goal” and how it was possible to “see the passion” they shared. Another MONT beginner mentioned how an obvious “passion behind the work” is what made Montessori worthwhile. Dawn explained how she chose CTP because she “fell in love with the idea of it” as she talked to people within the program. She also expressed the excitement she felt while interviewing with a principal who shared a similar passion by stating, "I think we both knew that there was an instant, 'Oh I want to work with you! And I want to work with you!' We could both tell that we were really passion about it." She says that it was obvious that this principal was “passionate about the community” that her school served.

Declaring one’s passion or love is not the same thing as showing it. This came up several times at CTP as the beginners prepared to interview for positions. At one point an instructor advised a beginner on how their teaching statements should provide specific examples demonstrating what “ignited [a] passion to work with kids.” To the whole group he explains that a good statement answers the following question: “Why you teach? Why do you do this? What drives you everyday? What are you passionate about?” Revisiting this theme with the whole group, he went on to note that the examples of their passion are important to justify their enthusiasm for teaching and wanting a particular job:
Think about this, every teacher says they’re passionate. I’m passionate. I’m passionate. I’m passionate. But they never say how or why. Think about why you’re passionate. I love kids. Why do you love kids? Why do you love what you do? How you make yourself different is by giving ... concrete examples of what makes you different versus saying I’m passionate.

He then provided an example of what they could say by stating, “I’m so passionate I get up early every day and get to work before everybody and I leave after every one, and I love that.”

Finally, the notion that teachers should inspire passion and love in their students came up at both programs. At a CTP seminar an instructor at explained the day’s “habit of mind”, a quote by Socrates about education being the “kindling of a flame”, by telling the beginners that they needed to “have that lens... keep that flame going... have that passion.” He went on to say, “It’s our job to make kids love learning.” This objective came up frequently at MONT. At one point an instructor asked the beginners what they thought the “portrait of a graduate should be” and someone suggested that elementary students should be “passionate about what they’re doing.”

Instruction was driven to achieve this outcome. The beginners learned to carefully select materials to, in the words of an instructor, “drive [students] in their passion.” The beginners were informed how the “uninterrupted work cycle” permitting students a sufficient amount of time to work on self-directed lessons and “follow their passion”. Instructors also suggested that “embodying Montessori” required that they be passionate. It helped if they were excited about the lessons they taught, and one instructor suggested that as new teachers they should select “the lessons that excite you and you’re most passionate about.” This way, she added, the students would see their teacher’s love for the materials and become similarly inspired.
Such expressions of passion and love reveal how aspects of teaching stirred positive emotions for the beginners. These emotions, directed at particular objects, suggest a connection to desire, though neither term by itself seems to directly communicate a longing for the object of affection or a clear motive. Indeed, several individuals could similarly describe themselves as being "passionate" about or “in love” with teaching even though each might be driven by different desires for the work (e.g., to be the best, to have children feel loved, to rectify injustice, etc.). Even so, being passionate or in love with an object seems necessary for a person to desire it intensely. In other words, it is incongruous to say that someone really desires a vacation but they aren’t passionate about it or in love with the idea. The most it seems possible to infer from such utterances is that a loved object, one that stirs passion, is in the speaker’s imagination and could potentially command more of his or her emotional energy depending on the circumstances.

Conclusion

As this exploration shows, the many terms suggestive of eros and object-directed emotion are not necessarily interchangeable with “desire”. Expressions such as “wishing”, “wanting”, and “looking forward to” were treated as conveying the emotion of desire, while other expressions such as “need”, “love”, and “passion” seemed to suggest affective states and preferences rather than longing.

References


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1 Indeed, seen as constructions, the needs of survival we hold so dear may reflect the utmost importance we bestow on living and the object of staying alive.
Appendix D. A tale of two lessons

Mark was older than many of his CTP peers. He had worked as a professional for at least a decade before choosing teaching as a career path. Born outside the U.S., he was adopted as a baby by a mother who was a schoolteacher and a father who was a lawyer. His adoptive parents raised him in suburban town in the eastern U.S. where he went to private schools from kindergarten through college. He claimed he was never a great student, and CTP’s Master’s level courses were challenging for him. He chose to enter teaching in part because he wanted to spend more time with his family. But it was at the insistence of his mother that he decided to become a teacher. Throughout our interviews, Mark repeatedly mentioned that his strength was in developing high quality relationships with students and his colleagues. He attributed this strength to his father, who he says built lasting ties with clients and was a beloved member of the community. Mark said that when his father passed away the entire community came to honor him for his service.

CTP placed Mark in Downtown Elementary, a historically low performing elementary school serving mostly Black and Latino students. When Mark and I first talked in December he was struggling but making progress with teaching kindergarten. He admitted to doing poorly on his second teaching event, where he taught solo for two weeks in early November. Exhaustion had set in and he had, in his words, “nothing in tank” at that point in the program. After a rejuvenating Thanksgiving break, the first he’d spent with family in many years, he returned and did a better job on a mini teaching event that served as a “second chance” to prove himself capable.

I visited Mark at his school several times and observed him teaching solo twice. The first time was a kindergarten math lesson; a few weeks later he was switched to a first grade
classroom of English language learners (he speaks Spanish). The switch followed a difficult period for Mark during which program and school leaders chastised him for consistent poor performance and, as he interpreted it, threatened to kick him out of the program. The second time I observed him teaching was during his first solo lesson in his new classroom. The difference between the two observations was striking and raised questions about the role of mentor relationships and role of support in cultivating CTP’s ideal of the “learner mindset.” Below, I recount the details of the two observed lessons along with his account of the drama that happened in between them.

*First observation of Mark teaching in the classroom—January 22, 2014*

The first time I observed Mark teaching he struggled with students’ misbehavior and showed little sign that he enjoyed teaching. The feel of his room was appropriately gloomy. I entered Downtown Elementary at noon on a bright sunny day and was immediately struck by the relative darkness of his kindergarten classroom. Little natural light filtered through the semi-closed blinds and the fluorescent lights mounted on high ceilings only dimly lit the room. The space was arranged into a series of stations with clustered tables and bookcases positioned to cordon off nooks for small groups to work. High up on the wall in huge rainbow letters was a phrase instructing students to work hard to become smarter.

Mark sat beneath an interactive digital screen in front of students who sat in rows on a carpet of rainbow colored squares. He had propped up his smart phone to record the lesson for a CTP assignment. His computer rested in his lap, and he used it to project a slide show with which he guided instruction. The lesson was on decomposing the number five. Mark started the lesson by reading aloud the lesson objective. He then demonstrated how to take one larger block and turn it into five smaller blocks by making four divisions. Looking out at the student he called
out, “Raise your hand if you agree with that!” Most hands went up. Assured that he could proceed, he handed out blocks to the students and asked them to turn to a neighbor and decide how to make three blocks into five blocks. The students became fidgety and after a few minutes he called out, “Okay let’s get back together! Three! Two! One!”

Mark had already reprimanded them once for failing to stay quiet and attentive, and the misbehaviors increased as the lesson progressed. At one point he displayed a slide with an incomplete addition equation and prompted students to fill in the missing components. He had to use his laptop to amend the equation; this took him 10-20 seconds for each change and the students became antsy as they waited. He frequently called out misbehavior and moved students’ clothespins up on the behavior stick from green to yellow, then yellow to orange. His demeanor, which was nondescript when I first entered, started to show his growing irritation. More than once he raised his voice to insist that they follow the school-wide expectation for good behavior. At one point he rubbed his face with his hands in a sign of frustration. The misbehaviors continued to mount, and Mark ended up moving two students’ clothespins from orange to red.

By the time the 45 minute lesson ended, the discipline stick has gone from having 23 of 25 clothespins on green to having six on red, two on orange, five on yellow, and twelve on green.

The second part of the lesson was math stations. Mark invited a volunteer to remind the group of the station rules, but the student was drowned out by student chatter. He then posted their rotations and said, “Point to your station! Okay, go!” The students dispersed to their stations. Mark worked at a table with five students. Before he could get started with them he inadvertently knocked over a container full of colored pencils and markers, which made a loud noise. He sighed and bent down to clean them up off of the floor. Several times during the session he had to get up to reprimand students. He spotted students hiding under a table and

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moves their clothespins to yellow. He also scolded two boys for arm wrestling and moved their clothespins to red. After twenty minutes Mark rang a bell and instructed them to clean up. As he walked by me he said in a whisper, “It’s a circus today…” I told him not to worry. “I know”, he responded, “it’s just, how many times do I have to remind them…?” I made a special note that Mark did not smile or show any overt signs of pleasure during the entire lesson. He was clearly frustrated, which he confirmed during an interview.

*The big meeting as recounted by Mark—February 2, 2014*

One time at the end of a CTP weekly seminar I overheard Mark and Ben joking about being the lowest ranked teachers in the program. As it turned out, CTP didn’t actually rank its beginners, but the two men had recently been confronted on their poor teaching performance and imagined themselves well beneath their peers in the pecking order for positions in the district. This confrontation took place during a meeting with program and school leaders that they attended together. It weighed heavily on their minds, and I happened to schedule our second interviews during the crucial period following the meeting when their futures in the program seemed uncertain.

Mark said that the meeting “blind sided” him. During it, the men were critiqued for the slideshow they each had used for the math lesson I observed Mark using when I observed him teaching in January. He and Ben had developed this lesson together and based their plan on one found online. According to Mark, “We went down the road we thought was right because we didn't know otherwise.” But Mary, CTP’s executive director, called this an unacceptable excuse. Other leaders at the meeting similarly told them that they didn’t want any more excuses. Generally Mark felt that their critiques, made in front of so many people, were largely unfair and embarrassing. He told me that his mentor had been out for most of January for family reasons,
and he had received very little feedback on his teaching since his solo teaching event in November. He added that it wasn’t the feedback on the math lesson that bothered him but the fact that he had received too little feedback thus far. He was accustomed to direct feedback, and told me

On a personal level, I'm somebody if you tell me I'm not doing something right—Okay, I'll go fix it. I don't get defensive. Ten years in f and b [food and beverage], most of . . . which was cooking, and having somebody scream at me about what an idiot I am, is a lot different than, Hey, let's work on your planning. You know?

According to Mark, the lack of helpful feedback persisted after the big meeting. He and Ben were asked to provide complete lesson plans for each week by Sunday evening, and he felt that the feedback on them was positive but vague. He reiterated a desire for direct feedback so he could do a good job. As if talking to his mentor and CTP instructors, he stated

Don't be scared to tell me that I'm not doing something right. I didn't sign up for this program because I knew how to teach. Just like I didn't go to culinary school because I knew how to cook. I'm sure I'm going to make mistakes; I've made tons of them. But if I'm not told something's wrong then I'm not gonna be able to fix it…

Mark worried about his relationships with program leaders and explained, “The trust that I had in certain people is essentially gone.” Even so, he still saw himself as a positive person committed to the work of teaching. As he told me, “I'm extremely approachable. I'm truly really happy, even though some of the kids [misbehave] I’m still upbeat. Otherwise I'd have been gone.” Toward the end of the interview Mark’s eyes welled with tears as he recalled his father’s legacy as a man who fought for justice. He shared his father’s passion for fairness. Looking ahead to the rest of his year he explained:

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Now I can still succeed in the program and do what I need to do to graduate and give the kids the best education that I can, but it has nothing to do with [the program] at this point. That is strictly because I chose the profession to help kids. [The program] is helping me get there, at least in theory—they put me in the classroom in the first place, so I owe them that. But in terms of the support and the rest of the stuff that I was so gung-ho for prior to two Fridays ago, that part's gone. And I wanted to be their poster boy: not the best academic student, not the smartest candidate, not the best, but I love it because it allows me to do something I really wanted to, and something I still really want to do. [Mark-int2-37:45]

I commented on how it was good to hear that, and he added, “Yah, 'cause I love those kids.” Mark considered himself resilient and still focused on his goal of becoming a teacher and serving students. Looking back on the whole event he concluded, “I know that it could have been different. But I don't have the choice.” Later that week in seminar he told me that he and Ben would find out in the next few days if they were kicked out of the program.

Second observation of Mark teaching in the classroom—March 13, 2014

As it turned out, Mark and Ben were not kicked out of the program. Mark was moved to a first grade classroom within the building with a mentor teacher who was willing to take him in and give him another chance. She was originally from the foreign country of Mark’s birth, and he felt an instant cultural connection to her valuing of relationships and her tough love approach to teaching. He considered her to be a good role model for the teacher he wanted to be.

My second classroom observation occurred during Mark’s first solo teaching within his new space. He informed that, for the first several days in her classroom, he observed and took notes on his mentor’s teaching; the following week she permitted him to advance to small group
instruction. In this, the third week in his new classroom, she is allowing him to teach full lessons unaided. Upon entering the classroom I immediately noticed a change in Mark’s attire. He had always dressed appropriately in polo shirts and khakis, but today he looked better groomed and wore a collared button-up shirt and nice shoes. As I sat and started taking notes, Mark was finishing up a geometry presentation and the students were getting up from the carpet to do independent work at their seats. He handed out baggies of geometric shapes. As the kids organized the shapes into patterns, Mark swung by his mentor to say that the direct instruction portion went a little longer than planned. She nodded. He smiled, adding that filling an hour and fifteen minutes used to scare him, but now he was going over time. He also stopped by to greet me. I asked him how things were going and he replied, “Much better.” At one point Mark stepped to the front of the classroom, clapped, and the students responded. He pointed out the students who were “tracking” him. He then used a document camera to walk through each of the shaped pieces, showing students how to label and complete a histogram. After the students completed the histogram work, Mark turned the class over to his mentor, who took them to specials.

While Mark taught I had introduced myself to his mentor teacher. She talked glowingly about him and explained that she took him in because she “didn’t want to lose him” as a teacher. She knew that his mother was a teacher and she could tell that he really wanted to teach. She said that he is a good listener and he was always learning and getting better. When his mentor returned from delivering the students, she came right over to give Mark a high five. She asked him how he was feeling, and he told her that he was panicked but he lightened up once he started teaching and attributed his success to a good plan and preparation. She replied that it was more than that. “You start trusting in yourself”, she told him, adding that the most important thing that
she observed today was his confidence. It was obvious to her that he enjoyed teaching and with confidence, she explained, “you will start to explode the teacher that is inside you.” As she said this she gestured with her hands as if pulling out something from within her gut. She went on to tell him that his skills would improve and acknowledged how much he has to do as a teacher in any given moment. But she thought he handled it comfortably without looking overly distressed. She gave him another high five before leaving for lunch.

_A desire for healthy relationships of trust and respect?_

Although Mark wanted direct feedback, it mattered how it was delivered and by whom. It was important to him that the provider of the feedback made an effort to establish a personal connection with him. He disliked feedback absent personal connection and respect. This was apparent in his reaction to the big meeting, which he viewed as public and impersonal. It was also apparent in comments he made about a principal that visited seminar to give advice on interviewing for jobs in the district:

One [principal] was a little too Manhattan for me. Like, Do this, don't do this. Don't waste my time, I won't waste your's. And you're just like [pulls back and makes a sour face] . . . Like for me, as someone who grew up on the east coast, I was like [shakes head], No! I'm sure she get's stuff done, but I just felt like it would be stressful every time I interacted with her.

He went on to add:

It's not a collaboration . . . Like, you're my minion. You're gonna teach that class. Go!

Yah, just like no real [motions back-forth with his hand] connection.

By contrast he mentioned an assistant principal that resonated with him. She was a teacher effectiveness coach who came across as “very relaxed” and, according to Mark, she
knew her stuff, but there was no indication of like [in a deep voice] I am AP . . . Kind of like it was with that other woman. And it just seemed like she wants to help us grow. Not just like, You don't do well, your test scores aren't good enough, you’re done!

Mark’s desire for feedback seemed tethered to his desire for meaningful, trusting relationships, and supplying honest information was a practice that, for him, had the potential to enrich relationships. A strong connection to his mentor had rejuvenated him and reinforced his sense that such connections are worth pursuing and may prove beneficial for other beginning teachers. Indeed, after my second classroom observation he told me of a “big brother, big sister” idea he wanted to propose to CTP program leaders where new initiates to the program would be paired up with recent graduates.

Mark considered his no-nonsense stance on misbehavior as a sign of his heartfelt concern for students. He hoped that his teaching conveyed the message: “I want you to succeed because I love you . . . because I love you, you need to do what I ask.” He did not think the students in his first classroom heard this message and he struggled to build quality relationships with them. Unable to fulfill a desire for meaningful connection with the kindergarten students, it was difficult for him to make good on his commitment to their academic success. And it frustrated Mark that, at the meeting, the leadership thought that his poor teaching performance and frustrations in the classroom signaled a lack of commitment to the school and its students. As he saw it, his struggles signaled a failure on their part to effectively support his deep commitment. But they saw him as the one failing to be more proactive in seeking feedback, and as I discussed in the fourth chapter, at CTP a major way of showing one’s commitment to students was through pro-active behavior and demonstrating a self-motivating “learner mindset” in the classroom.

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Mark exhibited more of that mindset once he ended up in a classroom with a mentor with whom he felt comfortable and supported in a personally meaningful way.

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1 The discipline stick, as I am calling it, was part of a district-wide effort at disciplinary consistency. All teachers in both of the elementary schools I observed use the painted stick and clothespin system.

2 Ben ended up staying in his classroom with his original mentor teacher. The differences between my first and second observations of his teaching were also striking. Unlike Mark, Ben seemed jovial and upbeat during the first observation and was visibly frustrated in the second observation. His mentor teacher told me that he had regressed in his behavior management and was struggling with a few challenging students. At a recent feedback meeting that I attended, Ben’s support team proposed ways for him to build stronger relationships with students by drawing upon his prior experiences with coaching and camp counseling.