A Measure of Goodness:

Art Teacher Identity as a Measure of Quality.

by

Hillary Andrelchik

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved April 2014 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Mary Erickson, Chair
Bernard Young
Eric Margolis

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2014
ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines how high school art teachers conceive of being a good art teacher. Motivated by my own experiences as an art teacher, I designed this study to add teachers’ voices to the conversation surrounding quality in education. My research design included a narrative strand and an arts-based strand. In the narrative strand, I interviewed and observed 12 high school art educators from a major city in the southwest. I conducted an autoethnographic reflection exploring my connection to the research topic and research process. In the arts-based strand I used fiber-arts to further understand my topic. I wrote this dissertation using a narrative approach, blending the traditional research format, voices of participants, and my autoethnographic reflection. I included the results of my arts-based approach in the final chapter.

Findings suggest that the teachers in this study conceptualize being a good art teacher as a process of identity construction. Each of the teachers understood what it meant to be a good art teacher in unique ways, connected to their personal experiences and backgrounds. As the teachers engaged in identity work to become the kind of art teacher they wanted to be, they engaged in a process of identity construction that consisted of four steps. I propose a model of identity construction in which the teachers chose teaching practices, evaluated those practices, identified challenges to their identities, and selected strategies to confirm, assert, or defend their desired identities.
The findings have implications for teachers to become reflective practitioners; for teacher educators to prepare teachers to engage in reflective practices; and for administrators and policy makers to take into account the cyclical and personal nature of identity construction. This study also has implications for further research including the need to examine the dispositions of art teachers, teachers’ evolving conceptions of what it means to be a good art teacher, and the effect labeling teachers’ quality has on their identity construction.
To Stacey:

My best friend, for carrying this load up the mountain with me. You deserve more credit than I can ever give you. Thank you so very much.

To Cynthia:

My mother, for making sure I always had more to work with than hangers and aluminum foil. I cannot thank you enough.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Mary Erickson. Thank you for working with me, for listening to me, for supporting me, and making me a better scholar than I thought I could be. Thank you for being my mentor and most importantly, my friend.

Thank you to Bernard Young. Thank you for being a voice of reason in this crazy process, thank you for being kind and caring, and for laughing and chatting.

Thank you to Eric Margolis. Thank you for helping me find my creativity in a world of rules. Thank you for coffees, and citrus, and apple pie. Thank you for letting me be me.

Thank you to the teachers who shared their stories with me. Thank you for trusting me. I hope my work does justice to yours.

And…

To Jawaher for blazing the trail.

To Erin and Liz for always understanding.

To Laura and Krista and Mary for always being excited with me and for me.

To Stephen for our great conversations and future research plans.

To Allison for being the best sister ever.

To Oreo and The Professor Penelope Sweet Pants for snuggles, squeaks, and help with some very interesting typing.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Figures</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

### CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Art Teaching</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Research Question</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention/Audience</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations/Delimitations</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of the Study</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Inquiry</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autoethnography</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts-Based Research</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Observations</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Review Board</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing the data</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorizing</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memoing</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory construction</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of field notes</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of arts-based research</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: IDENTITY THEORY</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity has personal and social aspects</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity is actively constructed</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity is situational and substantive</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identities are multiple</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a Good Art Teacher</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The idealized good art teacher</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Bronwyn N.B. Caton</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Salvatore Manilla</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia Wilder</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inigo Montoya</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching practice</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome to Sal’s. What’ll you have?</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inigo takes the stage</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily and the staple gun</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marley goes for a run</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxanne makes it personal</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of practice</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronwyn observes</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat examines artwork</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inigo gets mail</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily gives quizzes</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher wins awards</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem identification</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss M earns respect</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sal is honest</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CHAPTER 4: IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olivia’s big flop</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Reed’s new job</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy selection</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat becomes a different person</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia changes her practice</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss M distances herself</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell plays the game</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxanne shuts the door</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A completed example</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat constructs her identity</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An ongoing cycle</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to the identity construction process</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Teachers</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Teacher Educators</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Administrators and Policy Makers</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Researchers</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of strategies</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Visual Model of Research Design</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Participant Demographics</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Sample Field Notes</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Early Operational Model</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Visual Model of Proposed Identity Construction Process</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Sequential Model of Proposed Identity Construction Process</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Cyclical Model of Proposed Identity Construction Process</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photograph</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Detail of completed work, “The Good Art Teacher”</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teacher Identification Badge</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Visitor Badges</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Hello My Name Is</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hockney Postcard Front and Back</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Badges</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ireland Postcard Front and Badges</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Note from Jasmine</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Best of Show</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Floyd</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Teaching Certificate</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

AN INTRODUCTION

Good is an odd word. In some ways, it sounds pretty simple. This book is good. I’m feeling good. That is a good movie. But what exactly do we mean? Is the book good for a particular group? Or good for a specific topic? Am I feeling good in terms of the quality of my day or my ability to achieve something? Who rated the movie as good? My grandmother? A five year old? A professional in the film industry? Each of these aspects: audience, speaker, and comparative value, all impact the meaning of the word “good.” The word, often used and taken for granted, can actually have many different meanings, in many different contexts, and to many different people.

In the Oxford dictionary, good, is listed as an adjective, noun and adverb. As an adjective “good” has six definitions (including having qualities required for a particular role), as a noun three definitions (such as that which is morally right), and as an adverb one definition (well) (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com). Do these definitions clarify the meaning of good? Maybe in some cases, but probably not. The role I am being asked to play may differ from my boss’ understanding of that same role; my understanding of morality could influence whether I believe someone’s behavior to be “good”; my comparative value of what I feel like when I am “well” could be influenced by my past experiences with my health. What the definitions share, however, is that all are related to the quality of something and
specifically to the measurement of that quality. To what extent do I possess or display the qualities required for this role? Do my beliefs coincide with this other person’s behaviors? How is my health compared to yesterday?

Good also has many synonyms (excellent, effective, fine, appropriate, superior, wonderful, decent, exceptional, tremendous, incredible…) and antonyms (poor, ill, bad, inept, thoughtless, naughty, terrible, ordinary, insignificant, unvirtuous…). This book is exceptional. That movie was terrible. I feel ill today. Choosing to use alternative words in place of good may add a bit of clarification to the intended meaning, but can also still lead to similar questions (Decent compared to what? Ordinary by whose standards?). What is important to understand, however, is that the use of any of these words in any of these theoretical statements, indicates some level, some measure, of quality. Some measure of “good.”

*** CASE IN POINT ***

On the shelf next to my work space sit two books; one titled *How Good Do We Have to Be?*, and the other, *Being Good*. In all honesty, neither has been very good for me. The first was much too esoteric, while the second was just not interesting to read.

In many situations, the various meanings of what is meant by good can be understood by the parties involved, or may not have enough impact to warrant serious debate or philosophical discussion. However, the complexity of good becomes significant when it relates to issues that impact peoples’ lives. One context in which the use of the word good can have a significant impact is in the
discussion surrounding education. Parents talk about the good (or not so good) schools in their neighborhoods, the excellent (or not so excellent) teachers in their children’s schools. Teachers also talk about quality: that was a good lesson, she is a really good teacher, or I have some really good kids in my class. Politicians even get in on the act. President Obama often discusses the need to “keep good teachers in the classroom (http://l.barackobama.com/education/).” The same issues of using “good” to describe a book, a day, or a movie, apply here. Good for whom? In what context? And to what extent?

**Good Art Teaching**

The complexity of “good” is reflected in current art education research. Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, and Palmer’s (2009) illustrate this complexity in their report, *The Quality of Qualities*. In their study with Harvard University’s Project Zero, they answered three research questions: How do arts educators in the US conceive of and define high quality arts learning and teaching? What do these educators look for in art learning and teaching activities to gauge quality? How do a program’s decisions impact the achievement or pursuit of quality? Seidel, et al. interviewed 16 experts (theorists and practitioners) in all fields of arts education (music, drama, dance, and visual arts) who worked in a myriad of situations (school based, out of school, non-profits). They also conducted 12, two-day site visits, observed arts learning and teaching activities, and talked with 250 people about the issue of quality in arts education. Seidel, et al. found that the
quality of a program was contextual: quality was directly related to the programs’
purpose, was linked to very personal factors such as identity, participants’ ideas of
quality served as a guide for the countless decisions they made each and every
day, and participants believed that ongoing reflective practice was part of quality.

Pistolesi (2001) also reflected the complexity of quality by suggesting that
“good [art] teaching” is an evolving definition related to changing concepts of
what makes good art. She discussed how the post historical change in art over the
past 30 years has made choosing what to teach in art education very challenging.
Pistolesi describes the challenge of deciding what to teach as similar to searching
through knocked over bookshelves, broken pottery, and scattered papers in a
classroom after a devastating earthquake.

I believe it is in fact the search for excellence in art teaching and learning
that is the (often unspoken) underlying theme of almost all research in the field.
Quickly scanning Art Education, Studies in Art Education, or the Journal of
Education through Art and Design, one will find articles dedicated to the
improvement of art education. Some of these articles are written by art education
researchers who presented results of their research studies, while others are
written by practitioners about their classroom experiences with quality lessons
and approaches to teaching different art education topics. However, what counts
as good art education covers a multitude of topics, each based in a different
assumption about the nature of learning, the purposes and goals of the program,
and the perspectives of those involved in the teaching/learning experience.
Some research shows that quality is linked to teachers’ beliefs (Seidel, et al., 2009), to identity (Räsänen, 2005; Preskill, 1998; Daichendt, 2009; Graham & Zwirn, 2010; Ho, 2005), to the assumed purpose of a program (Seidel, et al., 2009), and to personal experiences during teacher preparation and as a student (Unrath & Kerridge, 2009; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Powell & Lajevic, 2011; Collanus, Kairavouri, & Rusanen, 2012). Reflection and reflective practice can also influence quality (Seidel, et al., 2009, Campbell, 2005; Giovanelli, 2003).

The perceived purposes of visual arts education programs can also be varied. Researchers have discussed the purposes of arts education and suggested that their importance in educational settings ranges from the way the arts allow for personal self expression and an exploration of individuality (Day, 1972), to making links to human issues (Roberts, 2005). Some researchers suggest that the arts should be used to develop habits of mind, creativity, and critical thinking in students (Hetland, Winner, Veenema & Sheridan, 2007; Heid, 2008; Hanson & Herz, 2011; Tillander, 2011; Mildbrandt & Mildbrandt, 2011; Lampert, 2006) while others suggest art should be used to teach community, civil, and social engagement (Richardson, 2010; Hutzel, 2007; Desai & Chalmers, 2007; Ulbricht, 2005; Midlbrandt, 2002). The study of visual culture and being visually literate may also be important to teach in our increasingly visual society (Duncum, 2002, 2004; Tavin, 2003; Freeman, 2003; Darts, 2004; Chung & Kirby; Smith-Shank, 2004; Carpenter & Cifuentes, 2011). Proponents of multiculturalism believe art education should include a diverse range of artists and artworks in order to
empower and promote dignity and equity in the classroom (Young, 2002). The arts, multiculturalists suggest, are a great place to bridge the gap between culture groups since art is not limited by language (Boughton & Mason, 1999). Much research has described multiculturalism in the art classroom (Sheesley, 1999; Kustler, 2006; Cho, 1998; Venet, 2002; Lampela, 2005; Henderson, 2005; Balangee-Morris & Taylor, 2005).

What does good art teaching look like? It should be engaging (Carini, Kuh & Klein, 2006; Levine, 2009); student-centered, authentic, and use real world activities (Salinas, Kane-Johnson & Vasil, Miller, 2008; King, 2000; Hesser, 2009; Costantino, 2002; Gnezda, 2009; Roberts, 2008); and occur in a safe space (Seidel et al., 2009; Hickman, 2001; Jennings & Greenberg, 2008; Cotner, 2010; Stokrocki & Eldridge, 2009; Susi, 2002; Lackey, 2008). There is debate over who would make a good art teacher; trained art educators or practicing studio artists (Lackey, Choue, & Hsu, 2010; Anderson, 1997)? Regardless of who would be best qualified to offer quality instruction, researchers have also considered how best to train art educators (Klein, 2008; Gradle, 2007; Henry & Lazzari, 2007; Bain & Haiso, 2011; Bain, 2004; Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland & Palmer, 2009; Conway, Hibber, Albert, & Hourigan, 2005; Charland, 2008).

While dealing with this complexity may be similar to searching through a classroom after a giant earthquake has disrupted the space (Pistolesi, 2001), I believe this complexity is also a necessity, a reality, and a positive aspect of art education. Teaching is a complicated act, and with the changing demographics in
the United States, this complexity is essential. Kraehe (2010) suggests being a successful art teacher means being able to integrate many variables into the classroom. One such variable is using collaborative approaches in the classroom may help to bridge the gap between marginalized and non-marginalized groups (Angelidies & Michaelidou, 2009).

The Problem

The discussion of what it means to be a good art teacher or to practice good teaching habits has become more complex as it has been extended well outside the realm of teachers, researchers, and those directly involved in teaching art. While the definitions and criteria inside the field of art education vary widely, people outside the field, including those in the public, political, and for-profit sectors, have begun to create a very narrow and singular set of criteria for what it means to be a good teacher. This narrowing has come about partially as a result of the passing of No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, and the more recent Race to the Top in 2009. Both of these laws call for the explicit use of scientifically based research methods (Barone, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2007) to evaluate and document teacher performance. These laws’ emphasis on the use of quantitative methodologies, coupled with the economic realities of shrinking spending on education, have produced an environment in which districts and states are searching for scientifically sound ways to judge teachers’ quality so that those
teachers who do not meet the criteria can be removed from the system in an efficient manner.

It is not my intention to argue that the idea of evaluating teachers to look for effectiveness is a terrible idea. It is not. Research shows that “high quality instruction throughout primary school could substantially offset disadvantages associated with low socioeconomic background” (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). What is troubling is the way in which the discussion of quality has become limited in scope and privileges a small set of aspects of teaching over a multitude of other factors; limiting “good” to one simplified definition. As Schulman (2007) points out, in our current debate, what counts as excellence has often been reduced to “the regressed gain scores of pupils who have studied with a teacher during some specific period” (p.6). This simplification, Shulman continues, may cause people to ignore and overlook many other factors that influence the practices of a good teacher and has given a distorted view of this issue.

The search for efficient, standardized, and often simplified evaluations has manifested itself in the form of district or state based evaluation systems in which a teachers’ quality is often based on a predetermined number of classroom observations, a teachers’ involvement in extracurricular activities, and the scores of students on standardized assessments. The evaluation documents produced often rate teachers with a numeric score, or perhaps, in the more generous of cases, a brief written summary of evaluator’s opinions about the teacher’s abilities and practices. The representation of the teacher has therefore been reduced from a
full and lively portrait, which takes into account the many factors that affect teaching, to an objectified portrayal of scattered and often disparate characteristics of teaching.

Art educators are not immune to these evaluations or their effects. When budget cuts and the focus on standardized tests based on core academic subjects cause districts to whittle away at the arts and other marginalized subject areas, the realities of evaluations are all too important. Many of the effects can already be seen in schools and classrooms, and can have negative consequences for students

**Significance**

In this study, I am not concerned with arguing about specific policy movements or discussing the nuances of evaluation systems (though at times they become characters in this story). I am not interested in arguing directly about the bias or appropriateness of No Child Left Behind, or Race to the Top. What I am concerned with is the idea that the current public, political, and for-profit approaches to defining good teaching and to locating good teachers are ignoring many of the realities of teaching by attempting to define good in a singular, static, and objectifying way. These policies have silenced the voices of many involved in teaching, and have ignored their stories, knowledge, and understandings, leaving an empty shell of quality. Ball (1993) refers to this lack of teacher voices as a “present absence.” Teachers are a people at the heart of much of the discussion,
yet they are surprisingly missing from the actual debate; Teachers are a people
who have been given very little discursive space in which to speak.

Not only are voices being silenced, but the narrowing of the definition of
good art teaching also ignores or overlooks many insightful narratives of teaching
narratives is vital because unless an art educator tells the story of what s/he does
and why s/he does it, someone else may tell the story and leave out something
important” (p. 6). He continues to argue that if art educators do not begin to write
and re-write their stories they may end up being trapped in a paradigm that does
not fit them at all (p. 7). I believe that this is the case in our current educational
climate. Art teachers are trapped in a paradigm that does not fit with what many
know and understand. The issue becomes even more important when one begins
to realize that policies and attitudes are being formed upon this inaccurate
paradigm.

As previously stated, I believe that most research in art education is about
good art teaching and learning; I believe people are motivated to conduct research
in order to improve something. Despite the abundance of research working
towards improving art education, there is a lack of teachers’ voices, teachers’
stories, and an understanding of how teachers themselves understand and perceive
the notion of being a good art teacher. Some people could argue that research
conducted by teachers in the art classroom, such as the presentation of effective
lesson plans, is, in fact, part of the teachers’ voice and narrative. I would agree.
However, this type of research only *implicitly* presents the perspective of the teacher; their assumptions can often be gleaned, but are not explicitly presented.

Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, and Palmer’s (2009) report, *The Quality of Qualities*, is perhaps the most direct in its attempt to explore what is meant by “quality” in arts education. While their report is comprehensive in many ways, it is also limited. The scope of their report is very wide, as they cover all areas of arts education, thereby overlooking some of the differences that may exist in each discipline. The report also mainly presents the thoughts and ideas of the “experts” in the field; administrators, university professors, museum educators, and members of state education departments. While the researchers also talked to teachers and students involved in arts education, the report does not directly explain how much these individuals’ (those involved on a more “in the room” level; those doing the teaching and learning) comments were taken into account during data analysis. The process by which the researchers chose their sample (of both experts and sites) also limits the types of people/programs the researchers examined. The sample was taken from a pool of people and programs that were nominated by outsiders, and the programs/people with the most nominations were chosen as the research sites/interviewees (p. 93). The people and programs chosen had to be well known, thus the report does not examine how their findings relate to the *typical* classroom, and the *typical* teacher.

I was only able to locate a single study in art education research that explicitly examined teachers’ perceptions about good art teaching. Haanstra,
Strein, and Wagenaar (2008) examined teachers’ and students’ perceptions about
good teaching and good teaching practice. They found that didactics, pedagogy,
and subject matter knowledge were all important to teachers, and that these
factors influenced curriculum choices. The importance of “being good” and the
potentially powerful effects this discussion could have on art education, support
the need for more study on this topic.

The Research Question

The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which teachers of art,
themselves, conceptualize being a good teacher in order to address the lack in the
current research. It is my intention to give a voice to art teachers and to expand
the definition of what it means to be a good art teacher by answering the research
question, “How do high school art teachers conceptualize being a good art
teacher?”

*** THE BEGINNING ***

If I may take pause here, for just a moment. As I write this, I
can hear the voice of my narrative writing professor, in my head. “Is
this really the beginning of this story?” He asks. To be honest, I’d
have to answer, “No.” The beginning starts with a question.

Am I a good teacher?

My interest in this research topic stems from my personal
background. Before I was a researcher, or at least the researcher I am
now, I spent six years as an art teacher in public schools. Near the end
of this time, a series of unforeseen events occurred that lead me to ask
that very simple question. I had always considered myself to be a good teacher. I liked my job. My students seemed to like me. They made interesting artworks for the most part. They laughed and smiled in class. I had friendships with my colleagues. I even had evaluations that ranked me at or near the top of the ranking scale. I don’t believe there was ever a day when I didn’t want to teach. I might not have wanted to get out of bed, but I never didn’t want to teach.

Then, in my fourth year, budget cuts resulted in the Reduction of Force (RIF) process being enacted. With the RIF, teachers across the district and state began to lose their jobs. It made us, my teacher colleagues and I, talk. We talked about how people were chosen for the RIF: Was it necessity? Seniority? Quality? In the good times, the discussion of quality mainly seemed to revolve around lessons. “Man, that was a great lesson,” or “That is a cool idea, mind if I borrow it for my own class?” There may have been some under the table ramblings about someone being “good” or “bad” but the conversation was just that: just a conversation. Then the bad times changed things. Quality became central to our lives. We worried about our lessons, our observations, doing what the administration asked of us, offending students or parents and ending up with complaints in our files. Quality was no longer something we talked about and strove for, it became the only game in town.

Overall, however, I think we all felt that things, that we, were still good. I know I did. Until one day, at 3 pm, sitting in the principal’s stark office.

“As you know we’ve been having budget issues. We have had to make some difficult decisions this year. When we did the numbers, we found out that we have to lose one position in the art department. This means that you will be RIF’d for next year.” I heard him say.

With this one, five minute meeting, my original answer to this question began to waver.

This is my beginning, my personal starting point.
Intention/Audience

It is my intention that this study adds another layer to the definition of what it means to be a good art teacher. I also hope that it can serve as a tool for art teachers struggling to exist in challenging times; for those who think about and work towards creating a quality art education for their students and for themselves. For them, I am sharing the stories of my participants in their own words, using a narrative style (Goodall, 2008; Barone, 2007). Much art education research is written in formal scholarly voices and is not accessible to the teaching community (Greenwood & Levin, 2000). I hope that by adding the actual words of practicing classroom teachers, my audience will see their own ideas reflected in the thoughts and discourse of others.

I am also writing for administration, policy makers, and anyone involved in the conversation surrounding quality art education. For them, I acknowledge that the pursuit of quality is an important and critical undertaking. The voices of the teachers are also for this audience. For them, I am working to construct a narrative, a story, that examines quality from another perspective, one that has been overlooked in the search for quality education, one that uses the teachers’ voices, the voices of those who are the deliverers of quality. I hope that these stories will reveal the way those in the classroom view quality as part of their own lives.

Finally, I am also writing as part of an academic community, as my professors, future employers, and colleagues desire certain displays of
competence along my academic path. For them, I am attempting to “contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation” (Goodall, 2008). For them, I am adhering to some sense of structural and traditional components of dissertation research, making my work more familiar, useful, and inviting to future scholarship in this area.

*** RESEARCH AS A SELFISH ACT ***

I am also writing, however, for me. Me as a former classroom teacher. Me as a creative being. Me as a woman becoming a teacher educator and researcher. For the me who asked the question, “Am I a good teacher?” For me who now asks, “Am I a good scholar? A good researcher? A good educator?”

I know this may seem selfish; some may even argue that it is just a bunch of navel gazing. To me, all research is a bit selfish. All research, I believe, is motivated by a personal connection, personal fascination with the ideas we choose to explore. All research is influenced by our preferred methodologies and our personal backgrounds and experiences. I will use this secondary, reflective voice in my paper to write for me. I intend to use this voice to question my own assumptions, to discuss topics and ideas that run parallel, interact, support, ram into or gently coincide with my research and findings. In this way I hope to connect myself with the voices of the teachers in this study, for at one point, I was one of them. I hope to connect myself to the administrators, policy makers, and others, because I wish to work with them to improve and expand quality education. I also hope to connect myself to my academic community, for it is a community I wish to be a part of.
Limitations/Delimitations

All research is limited, and this study is no exception. The sample of participants is the biggest limitation. My sample of 12 high school art teachers was concentrated in and around one large city, and therefore it is possible that their experiences have been influenced by location. All but three of the participants also received some, if not all, of their education at the same university. Therefore, this may limit the generalizability of my study. However, generalizability is not necessarily my goal. Ellis (1999) uses the traditional criteria for judging validity, reliability, and generalization but argues for an expansion/redefinition of these terms in the case of narrative/autoethnographic research. In order for a narrative/autoethnographic work to be valid, she suggests, it must have verisimilitude (1999, p. 674), and evoke a feeling of believability, and that it must ring true for the reader (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011, p. 282). This generalizability is tested by readers, asking themselves whether the account speaks or connects to them about their own experiences or experiences of others that they know. Readers validate the story by comparing it to their own stories, noting the similarities and differences (Ellis, 1999; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011).

The sample of participants may also be limited in that this is not necessarily a study of “exceptional” teachers. This study is, in many respects, about quality art education, and I chose my sample through a series of connections. I did not seek out educators who had been ranked either
exceptionally good (or exceptionally bad), for these rankings bring with them outsiders’ measurements of the teachers’ quality, not their own. Rather, the teachers are meant to represent “typical” teachers, for it is this group that can “bring us closer to what many…teachers do, why they do it…” (Hansen, 1995, p. xiv). It is the average, the everyday that gives insight into what occurs in many classrooms, for many teachers, and for many students.

I have also avoided evaluating the participants in my study. It was not my intention to participate in the evaluation game by looking at my participants’ comments, ideas, classroom practice, and student work to decide which were “good art teachers” and which were not. For this study is not about whether I think these teachers are good, but rather how they conceive of the idea of being a good teacher. How do they define the concept? How does this concept inform their practice? Do they consider themselves to be good teachers? Therefore, this study is not about the quality of these teachers, for all teachers have quality of some sort, good or bad, but about what quality means to the teachers.

*** EVOLUTION OF A RESEARCH QUESTION ***

When I began this study, I had three research questions:

1) How do high school art teachers conceptualize good art teaching/being a good art teacher?
2) How did they come to these understandings?
3) How do these understandings manifest themselves in their classrooms?

I wondered not only how high school art teachers thought about being a good teacher, but whether these things were present in
their classroom. It had not occurred to me, that by watching them teach, by going to their classrooms, by looking at their students’ work, I too would be, in my own way judging them. As my advisor said, I just chose a different switch to whip them with. The whip I was using was my own perspective on what made a good art teacher. The only thing this was telling me was about my own assumptions about what makes a good art teacher.

Does a sloppy room necessarily mean a bad teacher? For me, maybe, but only because I think a clean room shows good classroom management. But for someone who teaches from a more exploratory and spontaneous approach to art making, perhaps a sloppy room is just a sign of creativity in action.

Do students being off task from time to time make someone a bad teacher? Did I see enough of their classrooms to know that this was a typical behavior? Or is this just a kid having an off day?

Does show-worthy student artwork mean the teacher was good? It would really depend on factors like- what level were the kids who made the work? What resources did the school have available for the students? Might these things give advantage to one teacher over the other and affect my evaluation of them?

My research questions required a change. By attempting to see where the ideas came from and whether they were present in the classroom, I became the judge. Fortunately the richness of ideas surrounding my participants’ understandings of “good” was enough. And even perhaps, more important.

Lastly, this study is limited in that it only looks at the perspectives of teachers. Teachers play a central role in the educational process, but they are not completely alone in the classroom. The perspectives of the students,
administration, and community all play roles in the outcome of the classroom. Further research may be needed to gain a view of the larger picture of how quality is viewed in art classrooms.

**Structure of the Study**

This study is about the way the teacher participants conceive of the quality of their own practices. As the definition of what it means to be a good teacher is narrowed by policies and evaluations, the necessary complexity found in the meaning of the word “good” is also limited. These limitations ignore many of the facets that make education an amazing and intriguing experience. One missing factor in this discussion is the voices of the teachers themselves. In this study I seek to add their voices to the conversation by answering the question, “How do high school art teachers conceptualize being a good art teacher?” In their case, their vision of an “idealized teacher self,” the good art teacher, influenced their pedagogical choices and the strategies they employed when confronted with challenges in their teaching.

In the following chapters I explore and expand upon these ideas. In Chapter 2, I discuss the methodology I used to complete this study. This chapter includes the approaches I took, a detailed introduction to my participants, and data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 3 contains my findings and discussion, including my theoretical framework and a review of literature related
to my data. Chapter 4 contains my implications for further research. Finally, Chapter 5 contains my arts-based response to this study.

*** A FORMAL INTRODUCTION ***

I have been inspired, in my writing, by a book I stumbled upon at a thrift store. It sat on the shelf, its brown and black cover nestled between who knows what other titles. *The Book Thief*. The inside jacket cover revealed a plot that looked like something a friend of mine would love to read. So I bought it for her. A few nights later, I picked it up.

When I put it down a few nights later, I was sold. The plot was intriguing: a story about a girl in Nazi Germany. A girl who steals books. A girl who befriends a Jewish man.

But the book was also about the narrator, Death. It is about how Death views and interacts with this girl in Nazi Germany.

Since I began my work on this project, well maybe since I began to learn how to be a researcher in my MA program, I struggled with how to write research. I can write in a scholarly voice, but I prefer to write like myself. I can read overtly theoretical research, but I prefer to read things that tell me a story. I can attempt to remove myself, my own story, from the structure of a research paper, but I prefer to include what I believe is an integral aspect of this project, my own connections to my research topic.

*The Book Thief* was my answer. By adapting the style and layout of a story about a girl in Nazi Germany narrated by Death, himself, I have found a way to discuss my research AND my personal connection to these ideas.

So this story is also about me. About the way in which I also conceptualize the idea of “being good.” When I first started this project, I thought it was about me as a teacher. But now I see it is more accurately about me as a researcher, and me looking back at the teacher I was.
My own assumptions, my background, my likes and dislikes are woven into the pages that follow. My questions, my process, and my creative reflections on this study help to tell the story. Help to answer the questions.
*** P.S. ***

The person who owned my copy of *The Book Thief* before me penned five stars on the inside cover.

Apparently to them, it was good.
*** A LOVE STORY ***

The weight of it in my hands. The scent. The texture of the paper. There is something about reading those first few pages of a book and not wanting to stop. About waking up first thing in the morning and wishing I could grab the book and keep going. Good characters. Intriguing plots. Witty commentary. What books do I love? These days, almost anything about women living in foreign lands. Amy Tan. Lisa See. Where the characters leave the comfort of their own culture and are challenged by the unknown. I was delighted when Harry finally defeated Voldemort. By the thought of using a spell to make my dishes wash themselves. By the way the author makes me believe in magic and friendship and being brave. And I love Vonnegut. Love him. His cynicism. His sarcasm. His insight. The way he tells a story within a story. His jokes. I love John Irving. The way all his characters weave in and out and you are never sure, right until the end, how they will all connect. But they always do. The winding weaving way his plot unfolds. I love how Jonathan Safran Foer challenges traditional text structure of his books to reflect the feel of the muddled way in which our thoughts really happen. Overlapping. All at once. Crowded. Jumbled. The way Dave Eggers added an appendix to A Heart Breaking Work of Staggering Genius to address his own issues with his writing. And yes, I know he wasn’t the first to do so. Of course, the Book Thief. Spectacular. Visual. If I stayed home and just read, I think it would take me a year to finish all the books stacked around me. At least. And I’m a pretty fast reader.

I don’t claim to be a writer, or a literary scholar. I am sure some people would find fault with my taste in books. Admittedly they may not be exemplars of “great literature.” Maybe they don’t need to be.

But I do love the stories. And that’s what is important. To me at least.

The research question I am answering in this study is, “How do high school art teachers conceptualize being a good art teacher?” In order to answer
this question in a way that honors the voices of my participants and allows me to write a full and lively portrait of the issue I am studying, I had to choose the most appropriate methods from a plethora of options. This was not an easy task: some methods I was drawn to were strong in one area, but lacked in a second. Other methods would have met some of my research goals, but left a few stranded out in the cold. Others would have been interesting, but were simply not feasible for this particular study.

In order to best meet my research goals I began to view myself as a bricoleur, or “jack-of-all-trades” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 4). The term bricoleur is taken from the French word, meaning “to putter about” (Miriam Webster Dictionary). The product of a bricoleur, is a bricolage, or a construction (as of a sculpture or a structure of ideas) achieved by using whatever comes to hand (Miriam Webster Dictionary). Qualitative research is a field of inquiry that is made up of interconnected terms, concepts, and assumptions, drawing from a variety of fields, disciplines, and subject matters (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As a bricoleur, the researcher,

uses the aesthetic, materials, and tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, and empirical materials are at hand. If the researcher needs to invent, or piece together, new tools of techniques, he or she will do so. Choices regarding which interpretive practices to employ are not necessarily made in advance. As Nelson et al. (1992) note, the “choice of research practice depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context” (p. 2), what is available in the context, and what the researcher can do in that setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 4).
Leavy (2009) compares the researcher to a sculptor who carves the necessary tools (p. 1). Darts (2004) refers to drawing from different fields and approaches as a *hybrid* methodological approach. Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, and Gauer (2006) explain that many researchers utilize multiple methods from different areas of the social sciences including ethnography, hermeneutics, and action research (p. 1246). As I designed and conducted this study I found myself embodying the role of the bricoleur, reading and examining texts from a variety of genres and utilizing skills related to my background as a teacher and artist. Based on my reading and understanding of the research question, I chose to draw from two major research genres, narrative and arts-based, and utilized data collection and analysis methods from ethnography, grounded theory, action research, and visual arts practices.

*** MR. BRICOLAGE ***

In France there is a store called Mr. Bricolage. I went there once. And purchased, I believe, some firewood, a plastic container, and some pens.

I adopted Saldaña’s (2011) term, *genre*, when referring to the approaches I employed in this study. He explains that a genre in literature is “characterized by a particular purpose, structure, content, length and format” (p. 4). I feel this phraseology reflects one of the purposes of my study; to tell the stories and share the voices of teachers in a narrative (literary) approach. I used three genres: narrative, autoethnographic, and arts-based research.
Narrative Inquiry

The main genre I used is narrative inquiry, or the study of stories. This approach acknowledges the idea that the story is one, if not the fundamental way people make sense of lived experiences (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). The story is the way humans structure knowledge; a woven narrative in a linear story line makes history much easier to remember than a series of dates, names, and places would (Saldaña, 2011). Stories are a way of knowing that can alter how people think about what they know and how they know it (Goodall, 2008). Narratives “have the capacity…to entice the reader or participant through the particular physical realities it evokes…” (Barone, 2001a, p. 25) and “to raise significant questions about prevailing policy and practice that enrich an ongoing conversation” (Barone, 2007, p. 466). Narratives can also give voice to those groups whose voices have been excluded (Barone, 2007) and attempt to share the meanings and importance of a person’s experiences (Bochner, 2001).

The term narrative is a broad one whose borders are not well defined; it is interdisciplinary in nature and involves the collection and analysis of stories of all kinds including life histories, narrative interviews, and diaries (Schwant, 2007).

*** OF DATES AND BAD WEATHER ***

I couldn’t tell you what years the painter William Turner was working. Can you recall off the top of your head? I’ll give you a moment to think. But don’t cheat and look it up.
Narrative inquiry is both a method and a means of representation (Saldaña, 2011). As a method, narrative inquiry provides structure for interviews, data collection, and data analysis. As a means of representation, narrative inquiry allows the researcher to construct text in a storied way, borrowing from literary devices such as choosing a point of view from which to construct the text (Coulter & Smith, 2009; Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007), acknowledging coincidences, and using rhetorical devices that “draw a reader in and hold attention in a different manner (Schwandt, 2007).” Narrative research isn’t just about people’s stories, it is also about representing research in a storied way. Narrative inquiry can also be referred to as narrative ethnography, narrative nonfiction, Creative Analytical Practice (CAP) (Richardson, 2004), or autoethnography (Goodall, 2008).

Goodall (2008) explains that, researchers are often drawn to narrative inquiry as a way of writing because of an innate desire to conduct research to improve something, to make the world a slightly better place, not just for academics, but for those outside the “academy” (p. 13). Unfortunately, Goodall laments, much of academic writing is done in a way which inhibits these goals. He suggests that academic writing has value, as many research studies are important, but that more traditional forms of writing fail to “satisfy our needs as readers beyond providing useful information that we can draw on for our own work (p. 13).” Narrative writing can communicate meaning to readers through the use of stories (Goodall, 2008).
Richardson (2004) echoes Goodall’s sentiments when she confesses that she has been “coming out” about her displeasure with much of qualitative writing (p. 474). She suggests that qualitative writing could reach wide and diverse audiences, but usually fails and reaches only a select few. “It seems foolish at best, and narcissistic and wholly self-absorbed at worst, to spend months or years doing research that ends up not being read and not making a difference to anything but the author’s career (p. 474).” Narrative inquiry is an appropriate choice for this study as the constructs and aims allow me to meet my research goals, which include giving a voice to those who have been excluded. Narrative inquiry also allows me to present my work in a way that can reach beyond the traditional dissertation reading audience and include teachers, policy makers, and administrators.

I am inspired by the work of many researchers who present their findings in a narrative manner. Barone (2001b) used a narrative approach to explore the lasting effects of one art teacher on his students in, Touching Eternity. Anderson (2000) presented the stories of six art educators in, Real Lives: Art Teachers and the Cultures of School. I have also looked outside the field of art education to find examples of narrative writing. Jalongo, Isenberg, and Gerbracht (1995) presented teachers’ stories to assert the teachers’ authority of knowledge and explore their ways of knowing (p. xxi). Miller (2005) shared narratives taken from classrooms as an attempt to present the experience of “being a teacher” for an audience of those just entering the field. Authors such as Rose (1996 & 2005),
Kozol (1991, 1995, 2000), and Pope (2001) have used a narrative format to discuss inequality in public schooling.


*** A CONTINUATION ***

Any luck recalling exactly which years William Turner was painting? If so, well done! Maybe I really did reach a wider audience and an Art Historian studying British Romanticism is reading this. If that isn’t you and like me, you can’t recall the time frame exactly, maybe you can recall the story about how Turner once paid the captain of a ship to tie him to the mast and take him out to sea during a storm so that he could “feel” what it was like and improve his paintings. Maybe this might even make you stop and look at his paintings in a whole new light. It did for me at least.

Autoethnography

Narrative inquiry includes both the study of the stories of the participants in a study, as well as the personal reflections of the researcher (Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Davis, 2008; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Autoethnography is an
“approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experiences (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)” (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011, p. 273). Feldman (2003), and Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) refer to this as self-study. Autoethnography is based on the postmodern assumption that truths are socially constructed (Ellis, et al, 2011, p. 273), rather than universal. As such, autoethnography allows the researcher to examine the ways his/her own experiences influence the research process. It also allows the researcher to use his/her own histories, bias, and understandings to make connections between him/herself and the larger culture/issue he/she is studying. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) state that autoethnography is a way to recognize the effect personal experiences have on both the research and the researcher by making a space for subjectivity and the emotions of the researcher.

Autoethnography is an appropriate choice for this study because both the source and the background for my research stem partially from my own personal relationship to the field of teaching (Kilbourn, 2006). Crawley (2012) states, “I write autoethnography because I am common place; my lived experience is interesting because my social location is likely shared by many others and informative to a broader project of understanding…” (p. 154). I acknowledge that I am connected to the issue I wish to research. One of my main motivations for conducting this study is based on my personal experiences as a teacher and my desire to shed light on a social issue for a group of people to whom I belong.
Autoethnography allows me to address biases, and connect my story to the stories of my participants and the general issue at hand. In this study my autoethnographic reflections takes form in my narrator voice.

*** A POLYAMOUROUS LIFE ***

The problem is, I don’t just love to read.

In the second grade, I lived with my grandparents for a few months while we moved back to California after living in Germany for a few years. In the closet in the back room, just next to the teak bar in front of the posters of the USS Yorktown, my Dzidzi’s ship in WWII, behind the mirrored closet doors, my Bobie kept her fabric and yarn and needles and thread. A treasure trove. Or at least that’s how I remember it. Sitting on the brown shabby carpet she let me cut and stitch and make the most misshapen doll ever. With its markered on face and ill fitting blue flowered shorts, and different sized arms and legs. My Bobie eventually gave it orangey-red yarn hair with some fluorescent pink yarn bows to hold the pig tails in place. But still. When I think of all the crafty things I made from that point on, I wince. And smile. Crocheted clown jar covers for my teachers who were pregnant. Plastic canvas pins to wear on my sweatshirt. My obsessive phase drawing Chester the Cheetah with my favorite orange crayon. Thank goodness my skills have improved.

I do love to make things too.

Arts-Based Research

This study is not based solely on the ideas of narrative inquiry. The second genre I am drawing from is arts-based research. Arts-based research is defined as inquiry that “utilizes the elements, process, and strategies of artistic and creative practices in scholarly investigation” (Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006, p. 1234). McNiff (2007) describes it as the systematic use of the artistic process as a fundamental way to understand the experiences of both participants
and the researcher (p. 29). For Saldaña (2011) arts-based research is the application of the visual and performing arts to collect, and often present research (p. 14). Sullivan (2006) links arts-based researchers to education when he says that arts-based researchers are generally interested in improving the understandings of schooling, by utilizing the arts to reveal insights about learning and teaching (p. 20). This method is appropriate for this study because using the arts provides me with a creative way to work with and think about my research, thus giving me one more analytical took in my tool belt. Using the arts may also help me reach a wider audience including artists and art teachers. Finally, as someone working within the arts, advocating for the arts, and trying to improve art education, applying an arts-based approach to my research lends validity to the arts as a legitimate way of knowing.

While the general definitions of arts-based research can include everything from drama, to fiction writing and poetry, to dance (Leavy, 2009), I will be using an arts-based approach in two ways:

1. in the format of my written study
2. in a visual-arts based response, which accompanies this research

First, as part of the format of this study, I am not only attempting to write narratively, but am also playing with and exploring the layout of the text and the voices used to construct the text. Richardson (2000) refers to more experimental texts as Creative Analytical Practice (CAP) and explains how the writing process and product are inseparable. Unlike some narrative texts, I am working within the
arts-based traditions of using poetry or dramaturgical writings to present my work. I have done this by using two voices to construct this text: my academic voice reflecting the traditions of the academic research community, and my narrator voice reflecting my personal connection to the research questions and topic.

Secondly, as a visual arts based response, I created a fiber arts based artwork as part of my data analysis process and as a response to the findings of this study. While collecting, analyzing, and writing my study, working on this art provided me with another way to think about my data and its possible meanings. For example, my artwork began as an “ah-ha” moment while conducting classroom observations. At each school, I was required to go through different processes to obtain approval to gain access to each classroom. At each location I was required to produce different identification (driver’s license, IRB permission, fingerprint clearance card) and was also required to wear different types of identification while on each of the campuses (visitor badges, name tags). While looking at the series of visitor badges I had accumulated, I began to think about my own role in this study. Who was I? A teacher? A visitor? I began to realize that my own struggle to define my role in the project was really about how identity is formed both by the way one labels oneself as well as how one is labeled by others. Examining the conflict between the way I was being identified by the schools (as an outsider and researcher) and how I identified myself (insider
and teacher), provided me with valuable insight into some of the stories I heard from my teacher participants.

At times, I find the wide open road upon which arts-based research resides, to be a bit overwhelming as it can encompass and take on many varied formats. My understanding of this approach has therefore been influenced by the arts-based approach known as a/r/tography. A/R/Tography emerged as a way to connect arts-based methods to education, while recognizing that the researcher can simultaneously embody more than one role (Sinner, et al, 2006; Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong, & Bickel, 2006). The name itself refers to these roles; a(artist), r(researcher), and t(teacher) (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005; Springgay, Irwin & Kind, 2008). The slash between the letters is meant to indicate the multiple meanings of the words. For example, the slashes between the artist/researcher/teacher indicate that the a/r/tographer can embody either all three of these roles simultaneously or only combinations of them, depending upon the situation (Springgay et al., 2005). Unlike other forms of arts-based research that argue that the artistic work can be the sole product of a research study, a/r/tography recognizes that inquiry happens through both art making and writing. These two acts are not separate from one another, but are interconnected.

During this study I embodied the three roles of a/r/tography. First, I was the researcher; I conducted the study, lead the inquiry, analyzed the data, and lived within the process of “sense making”. I was also a teacher; I used to be a K-12 art teacher, and as such I am part of the issue I am studying. I am also a teacher
in that I hope my research will, in the end, be utilized by others to expand their knowledge and understanding about the research problem I am investigating.

Lastly, I am an artist. I come to this project with, “Art [having run] like a golden thread through the fabric of my life” (Hall, 1992). My earliest memories are of making art and I believe that art and art making are valid (and sometimes necessary) ways of making sense and presenting complicated issues, ideas, knowledge, and understandings.

While the evidence of my arts-based approach can be seen in the written structure of this study, the results of the fibers arts response can be found in the final chapter.

**Research Design**

Based on the goals of my study and my choice of genres with which to work, I designed the following research plan. Figure 1 is a visual model of my research design. This study consists of two strands indicating the genre; the arts-based strand and the narrative strand. The arts-based has only one sub-strand, the fiber arts based response; while the narrative strand has two sub-strands; the autoethnographic strand and the participant strand. Under each strand, I divided the research process into three steps: data collection, data analysis, and representation. Each of these sections of the diagram detail which methods I used in each step and for each strand. The arrows between each genre, step, and strand, indicate the flow of ideas, data, and process. For example, the double-
headed, horizontal arrows between data collection for the participant, autoethnographic, and fiber arts response strands symbolizes the way data collected in each informs and influences the data in the others. I discuss the details of each step in the research process in the remaining sections of this chapter.
How do high school art teachers conceptualize being a good teacher?

**Figure 1. Visual Model of Research Design.**
**Participants.**

The participants in my study were 12 high school art teachers. I found my participants through both convenience sampling (Saldaña, 2011) and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2007). I began by asking two teachers with whom I had previously worked (one as a colleague the other as a researcher) whether they would be willing to participate in this study. I also contacted a university-level student teacher supervisor to assist me in locating other participants. From these three individuals I located my first four initial participants. I then asked each of these participants whether they knew other teachers who would be willing to participate. While my sample was not purposeful, in the sense that I did not seek out specific individuals with certain characteristics, it is a sample appropriate for this study (Creswell, 2007) because my sample consists of a range of teachers in terms of age, years of experiences, and art subject taught.

The ages of the participants ranged from 28 to 61. The participant newest to teaching was only in her second year when I interviewed her, and the most senior teacher has been in the classroom for 29 years. Fifty percent of the participants hold Masters degrees, and 67% hold Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees. All but one identified themselves as either white or Caucasian, with the remaining participant identifying herself as Hispanic. Eight participants were women, and four were men. The teachers taught classes in a variety of different areas including ceramics (6 participants), basic introduction to art (6 participants), jewelry (1 participant), advanced placement art (4 participants), digital
photography (1 participant), stained glass (1 participant), and sculpture (1 participant).¹ Ten participants attended some of their post secondary education in the same state; only two were educated in different states. Figure 2 is a table detailing the participants’ demographics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Current Subject Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>BFA, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>BFA, Post Bac Certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>BFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>BFA, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>BFA, MED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>BFA, MED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>BFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 11</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>BFA, MED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 12</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>BA, BFA, MA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Participant Demographics: Demographic information for participants including racial/ethnic identity, age, years teaching, educational level, and subject taught.

¹ Total number of classes taught is larger than the total number of participants’ because some participants are currently teaching more than one art subject area.
Can you see them yet? Does this help you know them? I suspect not. But you will as this story continues. For now, let me give you just a brief glimpse into the people I met, the teachers who let me know them and their classes.


Data Collection.

I collected data through interviews and classroom observations. I conducted one 60 to 120 minute interview with each of my research participants, recorded the interviews on a digital voice recorder, and had each interview transcribed. I used interviews to talk with people about their lived worlds, views and opinions (Kvale, 2007). This data collection method is appropriate for this study because I was interested in looking at how teachers conceived of good teaching and being a good art teacher. While other methods, such as observing or collecting artifacts, may show how ways of thinking are enacted by the teachers, gathering data about thinking and understanding is best done through the use of interviews.

My interview questions were based in the narrative genre (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012) and designed to elicit stories from the participants (Kvale, 2007, p. 72). Stories, or narratives, naturally occur in people’s attempts to explain themselves (Mishler, 1986 as cited in Kvale, 2007) and are a natural way people
organize thoughts and express meanings. Elbaz-Luish (2007) points out that “teacher knowledge itself has a naturally storied form that is born out of their own stories, work with others, discussions with students and peers, the materials they use, and within themselves” (p. 359).

I conducted my interviews in a semi-structured format; using scripted questions to guide the process, but allowing flexibility for the participants to discuss issues or ideas I may not have expected to encounter (Kvale, 2007, p. 124). I structured my interview guide around a series of themes (Kvale, 2007). The three themes I used were: 1) How do teachers conceptualize and understand good teaching? 2) What life experiences may have affected their ideas? 3) How do they apply their ideas in their classrooms and lives? Appendix A contains the full interview script. As suggested by Kvale (2007), I worded the questions in a jargon-free style to be friendlier to the interview subject (p. 58).

Along with considering the types of questions and structure of the interview script, I also took into account the interview process itself. I attempted to establish trust between myself and my participants by using my background as a teacher. I acknowledged my role as a former high school art teacher to establish a connection between my background and theirs and to bridge the gap between me as a researcher and them as participants. I also allowed the participants to dictate the time and location of the interview as this choice can influence a participant’s willingness (or refusal) to cooperate with the interviewer (Herzog, 2012).
To collect data for the autoethnographic strand of my research I needed to reflect upon past experiences, in my case, experiences of my time as a K-12 teacher (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Ellis proposes writing about the “epiphanies or times of existential crisis that forced you to analyze lived experiences and those events that occurred afterwards that were never the same” (p. 275). To do this I worked with a narrative piece I wrote during a methods course I took earlier in my PhD career. I worked with the notes, documents, and drafts of the piece, to look at how my experience of being RIF’d forced me to analyze an aspect of my job I had not previously considered; my own understanding of teacher quality.

I also used self-interviewing (Holleran, 2009) in the preparation stages of the autoethnographic strand. During this self-interview, I responded, in writing, to the same set of research questions I asked my participants. I used reflective writing (Quinn, 2008; Holleran, 2009) to recall/write about these experiences. I also gathered documents from my time as an art teacher, such as images of student artwork, notes and letters from students, photographs of my classroom, and evaluation documents to help create a full portrait of my experience.
*** A LIST OF LOCATIONS AND TIMES ***

The downtown public library
Five houses
Seven classrooms
One Sunday
Three Mondays
Seven Wednesdays
One Saturday
One Thursday

Classroom Observations.

In order to get to know my participants in depth, I conducted a series of classroom observations with all but one of my participants. I spent two class periods, on three different days, in each classroom.

*** AN OBSERVATION ON OBSERVATIONS ***

Participants having babies makes classroom observations a challenge.

During these observations my level of participation ranged from a pure observer to a participant-observer (Saldaña, 2011) depending upon the needs and comfort level of the participant teacher. For example, with one participant, I sat quietly in the back of the classroom on a stool she provided for me, while in another class the teacher asked me to give his students advice about wheel throwing—something he himself was just learning how to do. I believe that my experience as a high school art teacher helped me gain access as a participant in some classrooms in a way that other researcher-observers from different backgrounds might not have been able to do (Walcott, 1997, p. 335).
It is hard to be in a classroom and not teach. Up until this point I had really never thought about that before. All of my research was mainly based in my own classroom, with my own students. The classroom was mine; the kids were people I knew. I knew what should happen when, I knew which kids were chatty and which weren’t. I knew the classroom policies. After all, I had created the structure. It was my space.

But this was a different ballgame. My status, insider/outsider, teacher/researcher, became an in-my-face issue. My first instinct was to just get out there with the kids and talk to them, to ask them questions, to give them help with their artwork. But that wasn't really my job, was it?

Was my role as a teacher even really my connection with the topic at hand? Was it my identity as a teacher that was the issue? Or was it me as a researcher?

During my time in the classrooms I took field notes (writing in a spiral bound notebook) and digital photographs to document classroom activities, space, and student work. Since taking notes and photographs can be a challenge for the researcher because he/she is pulled in many directions (Saldaña, 2011) I modified Suchar’s (1997) approach known as shooting scripts to guide my observations and photography (p. 36) by creating a list of topics to look for and photograph in the classroom. These included the classroom’s physical environment, examples of student work, direct, whole class instruction, and one-on-one interaction with students. This list, however, was not definitive: I adjusted what images I took, and what actions I looked for, as I shifted from day to day and classroom to classroom (Saldaña, 2011) reflecting on what I was observing and the needs of emerging research themes.
In order to protect my participants, their students, classrooms, schools, and districts, and to comply with Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements the photographs I took do not contain faces or identifying features. Instead I photographed the classroom as a space, student artworks, and classroom materials. In cases when I photographed students and/or teachers at work, I focused only on their hands, leaving out any identifying aspects such as T-shirts with school names or logos, or specific likenesses.

**Institutional Review Board.**

I applied for and received clearance from my university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Each participant signed a letter of consent before participating in any aspect of the research study. To gain permission to observe within each classroom I also worked with each school, principal, and district, as needed, to get permission to conduct research on each campus. Appendix B contains a copy of the IRB approval for this study and the letter of consent used.

**Data Analysis.**

Data analysis was an ongoing process during this study and took place in both the narrative and the arts-based strands. Saldaña (2011) explains that like the emergent nature of data collection in qualitative research, data analysis techniques are also not set in stone and can be changed or adjusted during data analysis, as needed (p. 89). He also states that analysis is an ongoing part of the research
process, often occurring simultaneously with data collection (p. 90). I found that Creswell’s (2007) model, which explains how analysis occurs by reducing data into themes through coding/condensing codes, and by re-presenting the data in a final form (p. 148), to be a helpful guide. Creswell describes this process as a spiral; one that begins with data collection and ends with the final account/rendering of the data. I used a series of five steps to complete the data analysis for the narrative strand:

1) preparing the data
2) coding
3) categorizing
4) memoing
5) theory construction

A discussion of my data analysis process in the arts-based strand is in Chapter 5.

**Preparing the data.**

One consideration I made for this study was how to prepare and organize my data for analysis. This step is important in any study with large amounts of data. Shortly after each interview, I had it transcribed and then printed. With my field notes, I adapted a technique used by Al-Bader (2012) that included combining both the written notes and images I took during the observations. I transcribed my observation notes, delineating each by day. I inserted appropriate photographs illustrating each observed action, object, or idea in order to document not only what I observed, but also to capture the essence of the classroom. Figure 3 is an excerpt from my transcribed field notes.
Students are working on their paintings. Some kids at my table are working with colored pencil on papers—I asked them why. They said they had to work on paper, not canvas, because they didn’t pay the class fee.

LB helps students one on one. A girl is working on a rainbow painting—asks if the kid feels like giving up? The kid says “yes.” LB tells the kid to not give up but to keep working. LB brainstorms ways to make the kid’s painting better—suggests using tape to mask off areas—straighter lines— and choosing one spot to start.

Figure 3. Sample Field Notes.

Coding.

To code my interview data I relied on Saldaña’s books, *The Coding Manual For Qualitative Researchers* (2013) and *the Fundamentals of Qualitative Research* (2011). I coded simultaneously, using a combination of structural, descriptive, and *InVivo* coding. According to Saldaña (2013), structural coding is used to code data to answer specific research questions. Descriptive coding is used to summarize the basic topic of a passage or piece of data. *In Vivo* coding uses the words of the participants AS code. I began with structural coding, reading each transcript carefully and searching for participants’ responses to a specific question, such as “What is a good teacher?” As I located a passage or sentence responding to each question, I marked the passage and wrote either a descriptive or *In Vivo* code, as appropriate, in the margin of the transcript. To keep track the different questions I coded for, I used different colored pens and
highlighters (Stokrocki, 1997), and kept a coding key as a record. After I finished each round of coding I copied each code (by typing or writing by hand) into one long coding list that I used for the next step of data analysis. Appendix C contains examples of a coded section of a transcript, a coding key, and a coding list.

*** INGREDIENTS FOR A DISSERTATION ***

1 camera
1 desk top computer or laptop as available
10-12 highlighter markers (preferably Stabilo Brand)
1 digital voice recorder with batteries
8 spiral bound notebooks, 70 sheets of paper
Hole Punch
Packets of varying sized sticky notes
Heavy-Duty Stapler
Large three-ring binders
Endless amounts of paper for printing articles, notes, rough drafts
Fine point black and blue ball point pens
A transcription company you can trust
2- 30oz sized cartons of Goldfish crackers
Various sugary snacks
A car and lots of gas
1 semi-broken but comforting desk chair
A space heater
A new kitten obsessed with biting your toes
A very understanding group of family and friends

Categorizing.

After coding to answer specific questions, such as “how did the participants describe good teachers?”, I found that I had a large quantity of codes with which to work. In order to make sense of this mass of data, I began to examine each coding list looking for similar codes, or patterns (Saldaña, 2011). I kept track of these categories by using a color coding system. I assigned a color to
each category and highlighted the appropriate codes in the coded list. I also kept a
category key to keep track of each category. I then typed a list of categories,
dividing the codes into their appropriate groups. These similar codes were the
foundation for emergent categories (Saldaña, 2011). For example, after coding
my transcripts for responses answering the question “What is a good teacher?,” I
found that I had a number of codes related to each other including “sing in class,”
“do interesting things,” and “goofy skits.” From these codes I formed a category I
titled, “Make class fun/enjoyable.”

Each round of coding resulted in a new list of codes and emergent
categories, each requiring a second round of categorizing, or what Saldaña (2013)
refers to as making “categories of categories” (p. 250). Once I sorted each initial
list of codes into categories, I began to make larger categories based on the
relationship of the first group of categories. In the example above, coding for
“What is a good teacher?,” I ended up with the following categories, “make class
fun/enjoyable,” “students know,” “class environment,” “get good artwork,” “go
above and beyond.” After thinking about and examining these categories I
realized that they all related to things teachers do in the classroom. I took all of
these smaller sub-categories and formed them into one larger category titled,
“Teaching Practices.” After creating the larger categories, I adjusted my typed
categories list as needed. Appendix D contains an example of my categorizing
process including a category key, a coded list showing color coded category
division, and a typed up category list.
Memoing.

The next step in my data analysis process was to write analytic memos to document and reflect on the coding process including code choices, the inquiry process, emerging patterns, categories and subcategories, themes, and important concepts (Saldaña, 2013). I adapted the structure of memos suggested and demonstrated by Saldaña (2013). Continuing with the same example used above, after I coded and categorized for “What is a good teacher?,” I wrote a memo explaining why I chose each category, the types of codes in each category, and various other thoughts regarding the concepts that began to emerge from this process. One section of one memo reads,

GOOD TEACHERS DO is the second category. This category contains codes about actions/things that can be taught/learned, physical things teachers can do that makes them good. Within this category there are also sub categories: TEACHING PRACTICES is a category that is filled with codes about practice, like lessons, and pedagogy, and student products. While RELATED TO STUDENTS is a category that holds the codes for actions directly related to students, including reaching students and having high expectations.

By highlighting certain words or phrases, I was later able to scan each memo for main ideas and begin to construct a theory about what was occurring in this study. Appendix E contains a complete sample of the memoing process.

Theory construction.

The last step in my data analysis process was to form a theory about what was happening with my participants. First, I began to draw operational models
(Saldaña, 2013), or visuals, representing the relationship and connections between each of the emerging themes (found in my analytic memos). This process of visualizing my data, allowed me to see the ways each code, category, and concept fit into the larger picture. Figure 4 is an example of an early operational model in which I was thinking through the relationship between the things good teachers “do” and the things good teachers “are.”

Figure 4. Early Operational Model of coding for “What is a good teacher?”

Secondly, as I worked through coding, categorizing, and memoing, I returned to the literature to find explanations for emergent ideas. In turn, the literature led me to deeper understandings of the categories, and I revisited my categories, memos, and operational models to adjust or reformulate my earlier ideas. For example, when working with the codes and categories for “What is a good teacher?” I struggled with deciding exactly which codes fit in the two
categories I created: “good teachers are” and “good teacher do.” Some codes seemed to belong in both categories such as “good teachers are caring.” Caring is something that may be inherent in a teacher’s personality, but it also must be manifested in some way in order to show that the teacher is caring. After working to define the categories through reading, discussions with colleagues, and refining my operational models, I located literature discussing teacher dispositions as having the skill, trait, and the likelihood to use the skill and trait when appropriate. The definition of dispositions turned out to be the clarification I needed to understand the relationship between the two categories (good teachers are and good teachers do). As a result I updated my categories and operational models to reflect this change.

Analysis of field notes.

My research question evolved over the course of the research process. Originally I wanted to find out if weather teachers’ ideas of good teaching appeared in their classrooms. During data analysis I realized that asking this question would cause me to make judgments about the teachers’ quality. This was oppositional to my research goals and the reason I was motivated to do this study. In the end I found that examining how the teachers conceptualize being a good art teacher (not whether they were actually doing those things or not) was more appropriate. I originally conducted observations in each classroom to
document the teachers’ practices. With the change of my research question, however, I did not need to apply any formal analysis to my field notes.

The field notes did, however, play an invaluable role in the analysis process. First, by spending time in each classroom I was able to get to know the teachers and their contexts in more detail than only interviewing them would have allowed. Second, by taking photographs of each classroom and student work, I had a secondary source to look at when analyzing the interview data. When teachers discussed ideas of “good student work” I was able to visualize the work from their classrooms. The act of observing, recording, and reading through field notes enhanced my understanding of the participants and in the narrative writing process.

Analysis of arts-based research.

A discussion of my analysis process for the arts-based strand can be found in Chapter 5.

*** AN ONGOING PROCESS ***

This all sounds so formal. So neat. Like a perfect framework existed into which I poured my data and out popped a dissertation. And while I wish that was a possibility, it isn’t really what happened. At all. Savage (2009) does an excellent job of talking about the complexity of methodology when she describes it as “looking at an overstuffed sales rack”—it might take a while to get it right, to find something that fits. That works but I’d describe it more like learning to drive a stick shift car. Jerky, random, frustrating, and exciting all at once.

Things just are not as linear as they appear here. When I first began to code my data, I sat. For about a week. Just staring at the
transcripts. I was familiar with them, I’d read them, and listened to them a few times at this point. I had the ability to code, I’d done it before in other studies. But for some reason, I felt overwhelmed I wanted to cry. Finally I began. What do my people say about good teaching? That is where I started. And it worked. I enjoyed myself, I read the transcripts with renewed vigor. Enjoying the awesome new pens I had treated myself to a few weeks back in a (failed) attempt at motivation. And then I was done with this first round.

It was me and my 10,000 codes. Way too many to work with. What do I do now?, I thought. There may have been more swearing, but I am sure it was something along those lines. So I started over. Divide the good from the bad. Working through the transcripts with this goal in mind, I realized that I saw an idea emerging. These people were not just describing what it meant to be a good or a bad teacher, but they were also talking about how they measured their own performance. And bam!

Like that, I had my next question to code for, “How do they measure their quality.”

Which lead to “What challenges do they face?”

And finally, “How do they overcome these challenges.”

Maybe Creswell was right. Maybe it is like a spiral. Maybe it’s Richardson and her sales rack. One thing for sure is it was NOT a straight line.

Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability.

Validity concerns the reliability of a statement of a knowledge claim. For a knowledge claim to have validity, it must be based on the weight of the evidence (Polkinghorne, 2007). Polkinghorne (2007) also suggests that what counts as valid in one situation may not count in another: each way of knowing has its own version of what is acceptable, yet “there is a general understanding of the concept of validation that is applicable…” (p. 474).
Saldaña (2011) explains that the terms validity and reliability come from a positivist approach that refer to the ability to replicate and the accuracy of some measure. Saldaña argues that qualitative research, such as narrative inquiry, requires other ways of thinking: he uses the terms credibility and trustworthiness. Credibility, he explains is the idea that the researcher presented a convincing story of methodology, one in which the researcher used the “right” participant selection, data collection, analysis methods, and thinking process, etc. He suggests establishing credibility by being clear about the process and procedure used and being sure to cite key writers on the topic. Trustworthiness, Saldaña explains, is done when the researcher explains the research process in writing in an upfront and straightforward manner.

Feldman (2003) argues that in order for findings of narrative inquiry or autoethnography to be effective, they must not only be believable, but they must also provide good reasons for the reader to trust them to be true (p. 26). Feldman suggests narrative inquiry can be valid if the researcher provides a clear description of what and how data was collected thus making the process as transparent as possible. The researcher must be clear and detailed about how the form of data representation was chosen over others, and why. Triangulation should be expanded past just types of data or methods of collection by representing the data in multiple ways, since each choice about representation is also a construction of the researcher. Finally, he suggests that autoethnographic
work must be clear about how the work changes the ways of being a teacher/educator (pp. 27-28).

Polkinghorne (2007) also discusses the issues of validity in narrative inquiry by first discussing validity not as a binary of “valid” and “not valid” but rather as a spectrum. He suggests that validity is actually a measure, made by the people to whom the claims of the writing are addressed. This measure is based on the strength and power of the argument made by the researcher (p. 474). Polkinghorne states that, to judge the validity of a narrative one must look at the likelihood or probability that the claims are true. This should be done by examining the evidence that the researcher has presented. When the writing takes on the form of a group of texts (rather than one long story), the work can be judged by asking, “Does the research do what the author claims it did?” (p. 479).

Finally, Polkinghorne discusses how narrative work also needs to be judged for validity based on the interpretations the researcher makes from/about the stories being presented. This should be done by examining the researcher’s justification for making these interpretations (p. 483).

Richardson (2000) created five criteria that are also useful when applied to qualitative writing. Her criteria are written in the form of questions. (1) Does this piece make a substantive contribution to the understanding of social life? (2) Does the piece succeed aesthetically and invite interpretive responses? (3) Has the author been reflexive enough, holding herself accountable and being open about data gathering, methods, and other ethical concerns? (4) Does this piece connect
emotionally or intellectually and move the reader to action? (5) And finally, does it present a fleshed out lived experience that seems credible?

Ellis (1999) and Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) use the traditional criteria for judging the validity of a piece of research, reliability and generalization, but argue for an expansion/redefinition of these terms in the case of narrative/autoethnographic research. In order for an autoethnography to be valid, Ellis suggests, it must have verisimilitude (1999, p. 674) and evoke a feeling of believability that rings true for the reader (2011, p. 282). Ellis (1999) says that reliability can also be judged by evaluating the amount of literary license the author has taken. Does the narrator seem to believe the accounts to be true? (Ellis, et al., 2011, p. 282). Lastly, generalizability in autoethnographic studies is tested by the readers, when they ask themselves whether the account speaks or connects to them about their own experiences or experiences of others that they know. Readers validate the story by comparing it to their own, noting the similarities and differences (Ellis, 1999; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011).

In order to ensure that this work is credible and trustworthy I have done the following things in the narrative and autoethnographic portions of this paper. First, I used an autoethnographic approach to address my own biases in a transparent way. I hope that by presenting my feelings, background, pitfalls, process, and choices as a researcher and teacher, I have provided readers with enough information so that they may openly weigh my choices to determine if my work is believable.
I have also attempted to create an evocative story (Ellis, 2000) that is fleshed out and seems credible (Richardson, 2000) by being critical, both in my analysis and presentation, about which stories, which narratives (both my own and my participants) I have used as exemplars. This is not to say that I have left out bits of my research that do not fit my findings, but rather when choosing stories to illustrate my findings, I choose the most compelling ones. I do not wish to sacrifice quality for the sake of a method. Finally, Ellis’s (2011) criteria for generalizability is also appropriate for my study as I believe that this work has the ability to speak to others about their own experiences or the experiences of people they know.

***A QUESTION***

Do you think this is credible? Trustworthy? Valid? Reliable?
Chapter 3

IDENTITY THEORY

The question that I sought to answer in this study is, “How do high school art teachers conceptualize being a good art teacher?” To answer this question I gathered data from 12 participants through interviews, classroom observations, and an autoethnographic reflection. I found that the participants in my study conceived of being good art teachers as a process of identity construction. In the process I am proposing, each art teacher’s understanding of what it meant to be a good art teacher was a version of his/her idealized-self (Giddens, 1991). This idealized “good art teacher” served as a measuring stick against which they enacted the remaining steps in their process of identity construction. These steps are: selecting and carrying out teaching practices, measurement and evaluation of teaching practices, identifying the cause of the effectiveness of their practices, and the selection and use of strategies to negotiate challenges to their art teacher identities. In this chapter I will discuss ideas from identity theory that have informed my findings.

Identity

Identity is complex. Some theories conflict or contradict one another; some draw from different fields, such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, and psychotherapy (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006). Beijaard (2006)
defines identity as “who or what someone is, the various meanings people can attach to themselves, or the meanings attributed by others” (p.282). Some researchers believe that identity is constructed in the “complex social interaction of language, gesture, bodily significations, desires, intents, and so forth” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 144). Some researchers also believe that individuals hold multiple identities that are socially bestowed, sustained and transformable, as well as material and phenomenological (Schwandt, 2007, p. 144).

In the following section I discuss four characteristics of identity that informed and support the findings of this study. Each of these four characteristics plays a role in the process of identity construction used by the art teachers in this study. The four characteristics are:

1) Identity has personal and social aspects.
2) Identity is actively constructed.
3) Identity is situational and substantive.
4) Identities are multiple.

**Identity has personal and social aspects.**

An individual’s identity is composed of personal aspects (the way a person thinks of him/herself) and social aspects (the way others think of him/herself). Ball (1972) explains that identity is based on a number of factors, which include what is presented to others, the social role one plays, knowledge of the actor by the audience, and the situational context in which identity is assigned. As a
personal aspect, one’s identity is composed of a self-concept, or the “real me,” which is gradually built up over time “based on a life time of self-images” (Ball, 1972, p. 180). Self-images are the “in the moment” version of “me.” Snow and Anderson (1987) refer to personal identity as the meaning individuals attribute to themselves. Self-concept is the overarching view individuals have of themselves as a “physical, social, spiritual, or moral being” (p. 1348). Woods and Jeffrey (2002) use the phrase self-identity as a combination of personal identity and self-concept.

While individuals can claim specific identities for themselves, they are also subject to the identities that others assign to them, or their social identities. Snow and Anderson (1987) explain that social identities are those attributed to individuals by others, as the others attempt to place them as social objects. These identities are assigned based on “information gleaned on the basis of appearance, behavior, and the location and time of action” (p. 1347). Ball (1972) refers to the identities given by others as assigned social identities.

***WHO AM I?***

I am a teacher. Or at least I was a teacher. An art teacher to be precise. I knew what it meant to be a teacher, and I did things that met that understanding. I taught in a classroom. I worked with students. I planned lessons, graded papers and projects, called parents, and went to staff meetings. I was a teacher. I knew what a teacher was because of my experiences as a student, with my teachers, with my colleagues, from TV, books, and movies.

But my identity as teacher was also influenced by those around me. How did my colleagues judge my classroom? My students’ artwork? My lessons? What about the administration? The parents?
The students? Did I look like a teacher to them? Did I dress like one? Talk like one? Did I seem like a teacher to other people?

Identity is actively constructed.

Identity is influenced by an individual’s internal identity (the way an individual thinks about him/herself) and by an individual’s social identity (the way others think about that individual). Cooper and Olson (1996) explain that “having or being a ‘self’…is much more dynamic, mysterious, complex, and multifaceted than any articulation can ever be” (p. 78). They view identity as a process in which self is continually being informed, formed, and reformed over time from interactions with others and from different positions (historical, sociological, and cultural) (p. 80).

Ball (1972) explains that identity is constructed through “continual negotiations in symbols” (p. 159) such as words, gestures, dress, the physical setting. As a negotiation, identity formation does not occur only within oneself but within oneself and in context with others. Individuals have the power to accept or reject their assigned social identities but they cannot escape them, because the assigned social identities explain how one fits within society (Ball, 1972).

Snow and Anderson (1987) use the phrase identity work (p. 1348) to refer to the activities people “engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of self-concept” (p. 1348). These activities include how one arranges the physical setting, how one presents one’s appearance, how one associates with others, and how one uses talk to construct or
ascertain a personal identity. They refer to the use of talk to construct identity as *identity talk* (p. 1348).

Markus and Nurius (1987) view self-concept as an integral part of identity construction. Self-concept, they suggest, is actually a set of *self-conceptions* that can be viewed while an individual thinks about self (p. 163). These self-conceptions may include good selves, bad selves, and ideal selves, but may also contain very immediate selves, such as the self that forgot to pay the car insurance bill last week. Markus and Nurius (1987) see self-concept as a set of schema derived from past experiences and may be influenced by the individual’s place in society as well as by the individual’s own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The schema include blue prints or strategies for becoming the identity one is claiming (p. 159). As an individual constructs his/her identity, he/she cognitively accesses these self-conceptions (p. 163).

***WHO AM I???***

I knew I was a teacher, and I also knew that others had thoughts about me *as a* teacher. I did things to be a teacher as I understood it. I planned lessons that had students thinking about social justice issues because I believed a teacher should *challenge* their students to be more socially aware. I also had students read and write about art because I knew those things were important in the art world. My friends were the teachers I worked with. I went to teacher conferences. I even talked about “my kids” and “my students” all the time. I was a teacher.

But I also knew that some things I did didn't fit with other people’s ideas of what it meant to be a teacher. In the school where I taught, art classes existed there so the students could “make pretty things.” Or so I was told by some of the students and a few administrators. As art teachers we could display our students’ work, but not in a way that made the hallways look “cluttered,” the principal
once told me. I called a parent about a student's failing grade one
time, only to have the parent tell me that her son deserved an “A”
because it wasn’t his fault he wasn’t good at art. At times the way
others reacted to me as a teacher, made me question my
understanding of what it meant to be a teacher. Sometimes I knew I
was right. I knew my actions were effective. I knew they worked.
Other times these reactions made me change my actions, such as how
I communicated with parents, my willingness to assign failing grades,
and what I considered to be the role of art in the school.

The comments from other people and my reactions to those
comments, began to influence my understanding of what it meant to
be a teacher.

**Identity is situational and substantive.**

As individuals actively construct their identities by negotiating between
their own understandings of what it means “to be” and the way other people
understand the same identity, their identities stay the same and change. Identity,
Ball (1972) contends, is both *situated* and *substantive*. It is *situated* in that
individuals present themselves differently depending upon the context. What
individuals do in one context or situation as they constructs their identity, may be
different from what they do in another context or situation. Identity it is also
*substantive*, however, in that the changing identities he/she constructs and
presents in a specific context or situation is *informed* by the self-concept which
has been built up over his/her lifetime.

The notion of a stable and long term aspect of self is discussed by Giddens
(1991) who refers to an *ideal self* as the version of a person that someone *wishes*
to be. This idealized self is key to self-identity because it serves as a guide with
which self-identity is “worked out” (Giddens, 1991, p. 68). Markus and Nurius
(1987) use the phrase *possible selves* to describe the conceptions individuals have
of what they could be or what they hope to be. These possible selves, like the substantive self-concept, or ideal selves, are informed by the long term “goals, aspirations, motivations, fears, and threats” (p. 158).

Woods and Jeffrey (2002) found that the substantive self, or self-concept that is built up over a life time and informs the situational self, can, like the situational self, shift over time. They found that when primary school teachers in England were confronted with a restructuring of their schools and their roles as teachers, the teachers constructed and asserted their identities by using strategies to make sense of their identities. Some teachers embraced their new assigned social identities, altering their practices to meet the new conception. Others, however, tried to maintain prior self-identities by positioning themselves strategically in relation to the new assigned identities, asserting their preferred identity. Based on these findings, Woods and Jeffrey ultimately concluded that:

…the teacher’s personal identity in the new order is partial, fragmented and inferior to that of the old in that teachers retain a sense of the ideal self, but it is no longer in teaching…. Teachers’ real selves are held in reserve, to be realized in other situations outside school or in some different future within. (p. 105).

In this way Woods and Jeffrey (2002) found that identity may be both situational and substantive. The teachers’ identities shifted through identity work as they attempted to reconcile their prior substantive teacher identities with newer, situational concepts of what it meant to be a teacher. Some teachers’ substantive selves changed as their situated selves changed, while other teachers actively worked to protect and keep their substantive selves stable.
Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) found that self-concept can evolve and change over time. Their extensive literature review and findings from a large-scale multi-year project that investigated difference in teachers’ work and lives and the effects on students, suggests that both a stable and unstable self may exist in teacher identity. They conclude that “the architecture of teachers’ identities is not always stable, but at certain times or during certain life, career, and organizational phases, may be discontinuous, fragmented, and subject to turbulence and change in the continuing struggle to construct and sustain a stable identity (p. 613).”

***WHO AM I?***

Every day in my classroom was different. It is one aspect of teaching that made teaching exciting to me. Each problem, assignment, student, and situation made me think and solve and help. Each time I did these things I did them differently. I was a little bit different. Yet in each of these situations I was still being a teacher.

How did I know whether these decisions were right? How did I know whether what I was doing made me a good art teacher? I used my lifetime of knowledge about what I meant “to be a teacher” to help me. I used my own experiences as a student, of the good and bad teachers I’d had. I used the reactions I got from my students the last time I did the same thing or taught the same lesson. I thought about how my actions would help me become the kind of teacher I wanted to be.

With each passing day, lesson, semester, or year, that life-long version of what it meant to be a teacher, of what I wanted to be as a teacher, slowly shifted. Slowly changed. Adjusting to my ever changing experiences.

**Identities are multiple.**

It is important to acknowledge that each individual may not just have one, all encompassing self, but instead may have many different selves. Goffman
suggests that individuals have many selves they present in different situations. For example, a woman may identify as a teacher, an artist, or PhD student, depending on context. The previously discussed theories, which contend that identity is influenced by personal and social factors, actively constructed, and situated and substantive, apply to each of the different selves. For example, each of the selves (teacher, artist, PhD student) will be influenced by both a personal identity and a social identity. Depending on the situation or context the woman will actively construct each of her identities (organizing her classroom as a teacher, writing papers as a PhD student, and discussing her work with a patron in a gallery as an artist). In each role, her substantive self-concept, idealized, or possible self, will serve as a measuring stick against which she judges her situational self.

I am mainly concerned with the participants’ teacher identities, though, at times, the participants’ personal identities also played a role in their construction of their teacher identities. In his research about teacher identity, Kletchermans (1993) found that a teacher’s identity contained five distinct parts. Self-image is the way teachers are revealed when they talk about themselves. Self-esteem is how teachers evaluate themselves as teachers. Job motivation is the reason teachers stay or leave their jobs. Task perception is how teachers define their jobs. Future perspectives are the expectations teachers have for their future and why they feel this way. Kletchermans (1993) found that his participants used a substantive self as part of their understanding of their teacher identities in the
form of a subjective educational theory. A subjective educational theory is the personal system of knowledge and beliefs that teachers use while performing their jobs (p. 450). The teachers built their subjective educational theories over their time in their classrooms. They acted as frames that the teachers used to implement their personal and professional goals. The teachers’ subjective educational theories were influenced by events inside and outside the classroom including events that relate to both professional and personal identities (p. 451).

Kletchermans (1993) also found that the teachers’ conceptions of themselves as teachers were not static, but changed over time as a result of their interactions with their environments (p. 448).

MacLure (1993) discussed how teachers’ identity construction is an active process, both influenced by and influencing context. She refers to a biographical project as a substantiated aspect of identity. A biographical project is the personal concerns, values, and aspirations against which teachers’ judge and make decisions. While a teacher’s identity, she suggests, is influenced by the context in which he/she teaches, the teacher also actively constructs his/her context as well.

For example, MacLure found that the participants in her study each described “community” in their schools according to their own biographical projects. One participant linked community to class and politics reflecting both his self-description as a “socialist” and his choice to purposefully live within the multicultural community in which he taught. Therefore, because his values, concerns, and aspirations, or biographical project, included an equitable
education, he chose to live and work in an environment that provided these conditions. He actively created a context in which he could teach and live in a way consistent with his own identity.

MacLure (1993) suggests that when an individual makes a claim to an identity (teacher, artist, PhD student), this claim is actually an argument in which the individual uses morals, explanations, and justifications to make sense of his/her identity, find consistency in his/her life, figures out where he/she fits in relation to others, and to defend his/her actions and attitudes (p. 316). Her findings suggest that identity is a permanent struggle for teachers, and identity as argument is a tool which teachers use to make sense of themselves, for themselves, and for others.

Nias (1989) found that while teachers’ personal and professional identities are distinct from one another, the personal is connected to the professional. Teacher identity, Nias explained, is influenced by the people with whom a teacher is surrounded, both in and out of the teaching context. In her research context, England in the 1970’s and 1980’s, Nias found that teachers viewed teaching as an individual act, and as such, required the use of their personal identities to support their professional teacher identities. Nias also found that as teachers progressed in their careers, they were likely to claim their teacher identities as their main identities as they began to more fully identify with “being a teacher.” Nias’ participants even described “being a teacher” to “being yourself” in the classroom.
Nias’ (1989) findings about teacher identity are also grounded in the notion of a substantive self-image that influences identity. She found that when the teachers’ substantive self image (of their teacher selves) was challenged (by changing policy, classroom events, working conditions) the teachers developed strategies to protect themselves from the need to “alter the ways in which they perceive themselves” (p. 21). This isn’t to say, she asserts, that the substantive self is fixed and can never be changed, but that the substantive self is hard to reach even with self reflection and exploration.

Snow and Anderson (1987) found that as the homeless people they studied used strategies such as distancing, embracing, and storytelling to construct and negotiate their identities in order to provide themselves with a measure of self worth. Woods and Jeffery (2002) found that primary school teachers also used strategies such as self-positioning, self-assertion, and self-displacement to protect their substantive identities, when those identities were challenged by external policy changes.

***WHO AM I?***

I’m not sure if I’d call myself a teacher. At least not in the high-school-art-room meaning of the term. I no longer teach in that setting. And I wonder if others would consider me part of that group any more either. I would consider myself a daughter. A sister. A friend.

These days, however, I think, I am mostly, mainly a PhD student.
Summary

To summarize, the four characteristics of identity that are central to understanding the findings of this study are:

1) **Identity has personal and social aspects.** Identity includes internal aspects such as how an individual thinks and presents him/herself, known as personal-identity and self-concept. Identity is also influenced externally, by the social identities others assign, based on their observations in an attempt to figure out where they believe that individual fits in society.

2) **Identity is actively constructed.** An individual negotiates between the internal and external influences on identity while he/she constructs an identity. To construct an identity, an individual talks and presents him/herself in a specific way, and uses strategies to make sense of his/her identities, and constructing his/her own contexts.

3) **Identity is situational and substantive.** The identities an individual constructs are situational; they can change over time as the context and experiences change. An individual measures his/her situational identities against more substantive, idealized, or possible versions of self. This substantive self is also subject to change over time, albeit more slowly than the situated self.

4) **Identities are multiple.** Each individual has and presents different identities in different contexts. As such, individuals have multiple
identities or multiple selves, such as a teacher-self and a personal-self. These identities may influence one another, depending upon context.

I found that the teachers in this study conceptualized being a good teacher as a process of identity construction. In order to become the teachers they wanted to be, they actively made decisions about what and how to teach, their ideas were influenced by personal and social experiences, their idea of what it meant to be a good teacher influenced their day to day and long term choices, and their teacher identities were influenced by their other identities such as parents, spouses, and artist identities. The teachers actively constructed their desired identities by engaging in a sequence of steps which include selecting and carrying out teaching practices, measurement and evaluation of teaching practices, identifying the cause of the effectiveness of their practices, and the selection and use of strategies to negotiate challenges to their art teacher identities. In the next chapter I will discuss each of the steps the teachers engaged in, using the teachers’ stories to illustrate each step.
Chapter 4
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The question I sought to answer with the study was “How do high school art teachers conceptualize being a good art teacher?” I designed a group of interview questions to elicit narrative, storied responses around the following themes: 1) How do high school art teachers conceptualize and understand good teaching? 2) What life experiences may have affected their ideas? 3) How do they apply their ideas in their classrooms and lives? After analyzing the interview data from the 12 high school art teacher participants, I found that for the teachers in this study, being a good art teacher was a process of identity construction. Being a good teacher was not something the teachers believed they either were or were not. Being a good teacher was something to work towards, something they were constantly striving to be. Being a good teacher was a process in which the teachers worked towards being the kind of art teacher they wanted to be.

Becoming a Good Art Teacher

Central to their process of identity construction was each teacher’s description of what it meant to “be a good teacher.” Being a good teacher was not an abstract notion outside of the teachers’ day to day activities, but rather it was an active part of their construction of their teacher identities. Their understandings of what it meant to be a good teacher fit the definition of an

73
idealized self (Giddens, 1991) or a possible self (Markus & Nurius, 1987). An idealized or possible self is the aspect of identity, a version of “self”, that is what a person wants to be or could be. As the teachers in this study described their practices, their successes and their struggles, it became clear that they were working towards “being” a certain type of teacher. They expressed frustration when lessons did not go as planned, they described how they altered the way they interacted with students, and talked about times when they accomplished something in their classrooms. As I analyzed the interviews I found a connection between the teachers’ descriptions of what a good art teacher was and their own pitfalls and triumphs.

The teachers’ descriptions of a good art teacher also meet the definition of an idealized self because the idealized self is formed throughout an individual’s life time of experiences, desires, and hopes. I found this connection in the teachers’ stories by coding the interview transcripts for passages in which the participants described what made someone “a good teacher.” I found the most definitive set of characteristics came in response to the interview question: “What qualities would a good teacher have?” This question, which I asked near the end of the interviews, gave the participants an opportunity to clearly spell out some of their ideas. However I found that the teachers’ understandings of what it meant to be good art teacher were also imbedded in their responses to other interview questions. The stories they told about their favorite and not so favorite teachers, their interactions with colleagues, and their past experiences with teaching, all
contained clues to what they felt “being a good art teacher” meant. Through their stories the participants painted full and lively portraits of “the good art teacher.”

Lastly, the teachers’ understanding of what it meant to be a good art teacher fit the definition of an idealized self because, as an individual engages in identity work (tries to “become” an identity), the idealized self acts as a measuring stick against which the identity is “worked out” (Giddens, 1991). As the teachers described the way they chose the types of lessons they would teach, talked about how they knew whether they were being successful or not, and discussed interactions with students, colleagues, and parents, they used their idealized self, or their idealized good art teacher, to gauge, measure, and guide their actions. Their version of the good art teacher served as the measuring stick against which they made their pedagogical choices, evaluated their practices, and selected strategies to construct or defend their identity.

***CONSTRUCTING ME***

When I started this process, I figured I would be able to relate to my participants, and my findings, as an art teacher. Working my way through the dissertation process, however, I found that while I was a teacher, and had been a teacher, I was really more of a PhD student and a researcher. A researcher reflecting on myself as a teacher. But also reflecting on myself as a researcher.

The connection I found with my participants and their process of identity construction had more to do with my process of becoming a researcher and being a PhD student than it did with my time as a teacher. Maybe that is because right now, as I write I am much more of a researcher than a teacher.

That’s the identity I’m constructing.
My findings suggest that to construct their identities as good art teachers, the teachers in this study engaged in a four step process. Figure 5 is the visual model of my proposed process of identity construction that the teachers in this study engaged in to construct their identities as a good art teacher. The process I am proposing contains five parts: the Idealized Good Art Teacher, Teaching Practice, Evaluation of Practice, Problem Identification, and Strategy Selection.

Figure 5. Visual model of proposed identity construction process.
The idealized good art teacher is at the center of this visual model and is the hub around which the four steps of the process occur. The idealized good art teacher informs each of the steps, and each of the steps is measured against the idealized good art teacher. These steps are *sequential*; the small numbers beside each step in the visual model indicate their order. The steps are:

1) **Teaching Practice** occurred when the teachers selected, designed, and implemented lesson plans and classroom management strategies, and interacted with others in the teaching context including students, administrators, colleagues, and parents.

2) **Evaluation of Practice** occurred when the teachers examined their teaching practices for effectiveness. The teachers evaluated their practices using a variety of methods, including making observations, examining student artwork, and listening to verbal feedback from people in and out of the classroom. The method each teacher used to evaluate his/her practice and relate to the teaching practice he/she was measuring. What was considered effective related to the goal or desired outcome of the teacher’s choice of teaching practice.

3) **Problem Identification** occurred after the teachers determined to what degree their chosen practices resulted in the effects they desired. After the teachers attempted to identify why their practices did or did not have the desired effect. If their choices had the desired effect, the teachers determined their practices had been successful and that there was not a
specific problem at that time, thus confirming their identities as good art teachers. If their choices did not have the desired effects, the reason why, or problem, challenged their identities.

4) **Strategy Selection** took place after the problem (or lack of problem) had been identified. Once the problem (or lack of problem) was known, the teachers chose ways to proceed with their teaching practices to construct their identities as good art teachers. Strategies the teachers used included maintaining a successful practice, adjusting one or more aspects of their chosen practice, distancing themselves from undesirable identities, and game playing.

I represented my proposed process of identity construction as an unbroken circle. The sections of the circle that connect each step to the next, represent the active process the teachers went through while working from one step to the next. The process of choosing teaching practices or evaluating one’s effectiveness was not instantaneous, but was made up of actions over time. Evaluating practice means that the teachers had to determine what they were evaluating, the best way to assess that item, and decided what indicators they could look for to tell them about their effectiveness.

While the four steps are sequential, the entire process is also cyclical. What may identify an individual as a good art teacher in one situation may change in a different situation, resulting in the need for continued identity work. The completion of the sequential four step process leads back to the initial step, and
the teachers continued to construct their identities, repeating the steps in different situations, and different contexts, with different practices. The arrows on the unbroken circle represent the cyclical nature of my proposed identity construction process.

The smaller, double headed arrows in my visual model indicate the way the idealized teacher self both informs and is informed by each of the four steps in the identity construction process. For example, the idealized teacher self informs the situational, everyday, minute-to-minute choices the teachers make while becoming the type of art teachers they want to be. These situational choices can also inform the teachers’ idealized selves over time.

In this chapter I explain each of the five parts of my proposed process of identity construction in detail, using stories from the teachers’ interviews as examples. I begin by sharing the teachers’ understanding of what it means to be a good art teacher. Next I show examples of the teachers’ identity work as they pertain to the four active steps of identity construction. At the end of this chapter I share an example of the entire process, both sequentially and cyclically, as a whole, using one of the participants as an example.

The idealized good art teacher.

The central part of the identity construction process is the idealized good art teacher. Identity is a very individual and personal concept. What it means “to be” a particular identity to one individual may be very different from what it
means to another. Individuals’ ideas of “what it means to be” something (teacher, artist, parent) are formed upon each individuals’ unique experiences, both past and current, their thoughts, and future goals. In this study each of the participants’ understandings of what it meant to be a good art teacher was an individual construction. I found that what these teachers believed made someone a good art teacher was related to the positive and negative experiences they shared with me throughout their interviews. By using their understandings of what it meant to be a good art teacher as a measuring stick, these teachers engaged in identity work to become the type of teacher they wanted to be.

I found commonalities among the teachers’ descriptions of what it meant to be a good teacher. The common themes were: good art teachers would care about their students, be knowledgeable in content and teaching pedagogy, and be organized in their planning and in the classroom. While I found some generalizations, each individual’s version of his/her idealized teacher self was unique and personal and based on that teacher’s past experiences. I have chosen, therefore, to present individual stories rather than generalize or summarize the participants’ understandings of an idealized good art teacher. In the following sections I share four participants’ stories as a representative sample of the larger group of teachers who took part in this study.
Mrs. Bronwyn N.B. Caton.

Bronwyn dropped out of high school shortly after she turned 16. Admittedly, she’d stopped going near her birthday, but it “didn’t catch up for me for a couple of months.” During high school she moved back and forth between her parents’ houses; one in Maryland and one in Colorado. This, she believes, caused her to be placed in classes that didn’t challenge her. While she did fine academically in high school, she struggled with the social aspects. She didn’t like the cliques, “I don’t think anybody does,” she said, “but I really didn’t like them. Enough to leave.”

She’d always been artistically inclined. “My mom likes to tell the story that, when I first started writing, I would write sentences, and for the words I didn’t know, I would draw a picture. If I was writing like something about my cat and I didn’t know how to spell cat, I would draw a picture of a cat. I’ve been kind of artistically inclined my whole life.”

After earning her GED, Bronwyn began college at 17 and eventually earned her BA degree at an art and design school. She recalled enjoying the freedom college gave her and loved being able to choose her own classes. She described learning best from hands-on pursuits. Her best memories from school were, “hands-on field trips. I grew up in Maryland, so we would go to really cool places, like to DC and actually see laws being made. We went to Williamsburg and got to actually see more hands-on history-type stuff.” This preference for hands-on learning was also part of her teacher education experience, “I don’t
really feel like I learned how to be a teacher through school. I feel like I learned how to be a teacher through my mentoring and observing classes and actually doing it. I kinda think that, even though you hear the philosophies in school, until you actually do it and actually teach....”

When she graduated with her art degree, Bronwyn tried to find a job as an animator, but couldn’t. She tried her hand at graphic designing and flipping houses as well, but realized that neither of these pursuits were creative enough outlets for her. Eventually she returned to college to become a certified art teacher. At the time of the interview, Bronwyn was the only art teacher at a semi-rural high school. During her interview she expressed frustration over the lack of support she believed she received from her administration and community. She explained that “I think that sometimes [the purpose of art classes] gets lost. People think that we’re just over here, I don’t know, finger painting. I think that the importance of what we teach is sometimes lost.” This lack of support was not limited to her current teaching experience, she also explained, “I didn’t really want to go to an all art school. I thought that, the practical side of me, the one that most people listen to, say, ‘You can’t get a job in art.’ If you go to a school that only has art, you’re kinda limiting yourself.”

***A NOTE ABOUT CONTEXT AND CONNECTIONS***

One thing I kept noticing while conducting my research was the way my different identities were connected. I was interviewing Bronwyn as a researcher and PhD student. But, Bronwyn and I used to be colleagues. Until, that is, the visual arts program where we
taught was cut in half in favor of a culinary arts vocational technical program. I was the half that was cut.

In her classroom she recognized that not all of her students were going to “do anything with art. I don’t think that that’s really the purpose, the overall purpose of art education.” Instead, she wanted the students in her room to feel comfortable and to learn about social interaction, “stuff like that, that maybe they’re not getting at home.” She also understood that her classes were very diverse, “You’ve got kids from all different walks of life, and you kind of have to realize that and appreciate that, besides just accepting it.” She believed a good teacher would need to be patient, have compassion, and be able to adapt in order to meet the diverse needs of the learners. “Not everyone learns at the same speed. You can’t just wanna rush through something. You have to account for that.”

Bronwyn also believed, however, that there was certain content related knowledge that students should learn in her art classroom. “Everything I cover, even the stuff that I don’t particularly enjoy teaching, it’s because I feel that it’ll benefit my students…. Just recognizing what, a goal for me is to recognize what would be most beneficial to them, even if it’s not something I necessarily want to teach.” To do so, a good art teacher must be able to design lessons that build one upon the next, until the students can gain a sense of autonomy. She explained, “…since I’ve built them up from the very basic up to their final project, I found that they can really make this thing pretty much on their own, which I think is
really cool. That it’s taken a semester, but by the end, they can make anything. If they took ceramics again, they could basically come in and make anything they want.”

Bronwyn was also very passionate about the importance of art. For her, a good art teacher is someone who advocates for “what we believe in and what we teach.” She explained that due to the perceptions of those outside the arts (parents and administration), sometimes her subject is put on the back burner. She acknowledged that advocating for the arts is “hard to do.”

For Bronwyn, being a good art teacher meant understanding her students and recognizing their diversity. To do this a teacher would need to be patient, compassionate and adaptable. It might mean that some students left her class being more social than when they came in. For other students it might mean that she helped them earn an art scholarship. A good art teacher is also someone who knows his/her content and can successfully design lessons that gave the students skills and techniques that lead to some level of autonomy. Finally, a good art teacher would believe in the value and validity of the arts and advocate for his/her program.

***EIGHT PAGES OF BONES***

I have a memory from the fifth grade, where I am sitting at my desk, or table, I don’t recall completely. I am working on at a paper about the skeletal system. I loved it. I loved looking at the books, the encyclopedia, and probably something from national geographic I’d found on the book shelf in the hall outside my room. I think I ended up writing eight pages, more than I am sure we needed to in the fifth grade. I even included drawings of bones. And I even drew a cover for
it; a drawing of the human skull. I put the pages in a red folder. The kind of folder with the little white binding in the middle with those three little prongs that you fold back to keep the pages in.

I remember getting an A. In red marker. An A. With a circle around it.

Mr. Salvatore Manilla.

Sal’s high school art teacher “never taught us anything,” he explained to me. “He didn’t do demos; he didn’t assign assignments. He worked on his own art. He was the first American allowed into China to study art and he was really, really good. He would make all kinds of stuff. He’d work in marble; he’d work in wood. He’d make these gigantic sculptures. Seein’ him helped me, but I don’t know. It just kind of forced me to just make art, which, I don’t know; I had the right temperament for it.”

Sal explained that this lack of instruction and the freedom to explore worked well for him; it engaged him in art making. His high school art teacher used to give him things, like water colors and a stack of paper, or a half finished sculpture of a nude woman, and just tell him, “Here, just take this. Take a look at it and see what you think.” He recalled that this teacher’s hands-off approach worked very well for him. “I don’t remember anybody else’s work; I don’t remember, and I was consumed with what I was doing. I was completely into it.”

In college, Sal felt disappointed with his studio courses. “‘Make a sculpture out of trash that is a social commentary,’ and it was just so confining and I thought, ‘Oh well.’” Despite this frustration, Sal found “this one particular guy I just really clicked and that’s why I became an art teacher is because of
him.” He described how, “I know I’m supposed to be a teacher…. I couldn’t tell you my thought process or anything; I just know that there I was at the end.”

Sal also shared his struggles with people he did not necessarily “flow” with. One of his professors, whom he described as “uptight,” taught mainly about “theory and for me, anyway I had a hard time picturing ‘why am I gonna need this?’ Throughout the interview, Sal was also quick to take personal responsibility for some of his struggles. “‘I just wanna get into the classroom and then I’ll understand why I need this stuff’,” he shared, “so I don’t know. I’m sure the fault is mine.”

For Sal, one key to a good classroom was the environment. A good teacher was someone who could create an environment where the students felt excited about what they were doing. He shared, “Yeah, but I think creating a good environment to work in really makes a difference cuz you walk into some classrooms and you think, ‘It’s so drab; it’s so’ then you walk into other ones and visually it’s very exciting, there’s a lot goin’ on. It all makes a difference.” Classroom environment can also be ruined if a teacher gets angry, Sal said because anger and yelling by the teacher can change the mood and the feel in the classroom. As Sal recalled his student teaching experience with a woman in her last year of teaching, he observed, she was, “totally burnt out. I think she’d been teaching for about 30 years or somethin’ like that, and she would just give the kids handouts. She sucked all the life out of art.”
***SETTING THE STAGE***

One thing I noticed about Sal’s classroom was that it was mellow. Really relaxed. His overhead lights were dimmed and scented candles cut through the classroom air. He never raised his voice. Neither did the students.

Sal also thought it was important to challenge his students and make them go further, work to their potential, and break down any barriers they had. “I like working with people. I like seeing kids turn on. Had so many times, and it’s usually the kids that will fight me the most, they’ll just resist, resist and I’m like, ‘Come on. You could be more creative than this,’ and it’s kind of a struggle there for a while and then at some point they’re like, ‘Now I get it. Now I understand what art is. I know how to do this,’ and there’s a breakthrough. That moment for me is amazing.”

While it is important for good teachers to push their students and challenge the students’ boundaries, Sal was also aware that each of his students had different needs. He explained, “I try to leave a lot of freedom [in the assignments] and leave it pretty open as much as possible, and I think for certain kids they really do thrive on that. Other kids that need, ‘this is exactly what you do: do this and then you do this,’ they kind of have a hard time with it….” While Sal was talking with me about where he gets ideas for his lesson plans, he again referred to the importance of understanding his students’ different needs. “For some kids. You never know. I believe that some people are ready now to make art. Some kids, the window may be further down the road or whatever or even just to think about the world artistically, so I’m like, I’m just gonna throw it all
out there and not get frustrated if it doesn’t click or if I don’t see results right now but just believe maybe I’m planting a seed and somewhere down the road some kid’ll be like, ‘Oh,’ make that connection…."

To Sal, being a good teacher meant someone who could get his/her students to push themselves and take personal responsibility for their effort and work. To do this a good teacher should focus on creating an environment that gets the students excited, because if they are excited, they will work. This might be accomplished by physically arranging the classroom in a certain way, or even just being relaxed when working and interacting with his/her students. Sal also believed, however, that his students had different needs. Therefore Sal believed that a good teacher should know how to adapt to his/her students’ diversity. This could come by adjusting the structure of a lesson or by having a little faith that while the student might not “get it right now,” the seed just planted might be slowly growing.

***RED CAPES AND ELEPHANT SHOES***

My senior year of high school I took a humanities class with one of the best teachers I’ve ever had. She wore this red flowey cape and had these shoes with embossed safari animals, like elephants and giraffes, on the heels. She had been an editor for some fancy publishing company before becoming a high school teacher. In her class she had us write research papers. But unlike in other classes, she let us choose our own topics.

I wrote a paper about Bette Midler. In my art class I drew a portrait of Better Midler too.
Olivia Wilder.

Olivia always liked school. She liked being a student. “I think I was a good student, I was a smart kid. Learning came easy and I liked to impress my teachers. I think it probably made school fun because I could always do everything and I was usually one of the best at it.” In high school she was a “busy body” participating in all sorts of clubs and teams. She liked to try new things and was “fairly successful” at everything she tried.

In the beginning she was afraid to take art. In middle school, however, a “fantastic” teacher made art class so fun, that she “just liked being there.” The teacher pushed her and made her think about a lot of things which made art interesting. Her high school teacher, however, was “so ridiculous to me that I kind of tried to be weird in spite of him…. He pretty much just left us on our own…like for AP [Art] he was like, ‘Here’s the packet. You have to have 30 pieces done. The instructions are here. I’ll be checking.’ Like about every four weeks he would check to see that we had done something. He never sat and fought me on anything or taught me anything. He just left me to explore on my own, which is fine but then my- I feel like I’m inhibited by only what I could find out. He gave me nothing and he inputted nothing. Yeah, he never challenged my ideas. He would say, I remember he would say things and so I’d go do exactly opposite what he’d said just to prove him wrong. He never. Nothing. There was no feedback. As I went through college and got to go see different teachers teaching in high school I always was like I would be so much better of an artist if
I had had a teacher that pushed me or gave me more ideas or challenged my ideas or whatever.” Despite her struggles with her high school art teacher she still found art to be an escape and a comfort from the difficulties of being a teenager. “… I think I went through stuff that’s not outside of what regular kids go through but being a teenager is hard.”

One of Olivia’s first teaching “gigs” was teaching art at a live-in treatment center for boys. “There was this spread of pretty much the worst of the worst in any direction you look. We had the gangster people in there cuz they broke the law because they were criminals or whatever. Then we had the kids that were in there because they tried to commit suicide and they were cutting or whatever. You’ve got the severely depressed or, then we had the crazy and then we had the special, even like they were giving us students with severe autism or Tourette’s or whatever… There’s a lot of hurting little souls.” Eventually, she changed jobs and began teaching high school art at an inner city school. Her current school is “lower income,” with girls who drop out because they are pregnant or have children at home. “They have rough lives. I think they’re just brought up with bite in them. They just- they don’t- rarely do they- are they like, ‘Okay.’ Always like, ‘Why do we have to do that?’”

Olivia loves her job and finds the students funny. “… getting to know them through their working on [their projects]…. I think it’s a fairly social job. I think that it, if you let it and if you’re, if you love your students and you invest in them it really does, feels worth something. I know a lot of friends that are a little
disillusioned with the point of their...if they’re not totally money inspired and I’m making all this money, then their jobs like take it or leave it; ‘I’m not doing anything special with myself.’ I think that I’ve always had that satisfaction that I’m important to someone or I could be if I tried harder.”

Olivia eventually decided to become a teacher so that she could “give kids a place to be safe” and do things differently from what she experienced as a student. To Olivia, a good teacher was someone who cares for his/her students, and who could make them feel safe. When describing one particularly challenging student, Olivia said, “I remember noting how dark he was. Just darkness around him. Like he just, he never looked anyone in the eye and he was so dark. He’d come in. He had, I got, I kinda made it my business to get to know him because he was just so sad like you could just see it. At that school I was, it was like my mission to give the boys like one half hour that wasn’t hell to them.”

In her classroom she wanted her students to leave knowing “they can do something that they didn’t think they could and all they had to do was learn to be open to it. I like that they learn they can do something. I like that they gain confidence in themselves because gaining confidence there then opens them up to confidence in lots of other things.” For Olivia, a good teacher was someone who challenged his/her students to think, become more open minded, and appreciate things, “so that when they leave my class I would like them to a, leave with just a nice, like I said from the beginning, a nice memory; a nice safe place that they were able to be.”
While observing in Olivia’s classroom, I couldn’t help but wonder, “If the walls of her classroom could talk, what would they say?” I imagine they’d say things like, “Where did you find the bright pink and yellow paint?” Or, “Did you really travel to all these places? Because the pictures are amazing!”

The ceiling might say, “Do you think we could take down the sock monkey you have hanging by a rope? It is kind of disturbing me.”

Olivia believed that good teachers loved what they were doing and people had a “zest for life.” Teaching is a hard job, she said, because “it’s exhausting to be the center of attention of that many children…trying to manage and then motivate and then reprimand and then encourage…then when you’re done with school if you were being a good teacher then you’d probably have a ton of stuff to grade and look over and to get ready for the next day. It’s just completely exhausting mentally and emotionally and physically.” So a good art teacher had better want to be there, love their subject, love their students, and be willing to “roll with the punches” in order to overcome the stressful nature of the job.

To Olivia, good art teachers made their classrooms safe places where the students could feel cared for and gain confidence. A good teacher would also push students and get them to think outside the box, consider new opinions, and be creative. She also recognized that doing these things would be challenging, so being a good teacher would also mean having passion for the job, the students, and the ability to be flexible.
Like Olivia, I think passion is essential. A good researcher should love to write and have passion for what they are doing. If you love what you are writing about, then you'll be more engaged; you'll become engaged in the topic. It will become a part of you, not just something you do.

But, I also think a good researcher should try and write so that people will read their work.

**Inigo Montoya.**

Many of Inigo’s best memories of school came from art class. He had a couple of art teachers in high school who, “I think, encouraged me to continue to explore and to grow and to try different media and really encouraged me just to really push myself in the arts, you know, challenge me. I had a teacher in high school … who’s actually well known as an artist too. Seeing her as being someone who is not just a teacher, an educator, but also as someone who really is passionate about her own art, I think, really kind of was an important model for me too.”

Inigo also enjoyed courses where the instructors made classes “a lot of fun,” and pushed him with challenging assignments. He also preferred classes that had real world applications, “I always struggled in math. It was never an area that I really enjoyed, but ironically I really enjoyed physics and did really well in that kinda’ thing, so I think, for me, it was hard to do math if I didn’t see a direct application.” He had a similar experience during his teacher preparation courses. “You know a lot of the methodology and stuff and things that I took, I’m sure it
was good, but to be honest, the art ed classes were much more memorable for me and I think much more functional and useful than what I….”

In his classroom, Inigo believed that his students needed to be engaged, needed to enjoy what they were working on, and achieve and be successful with the project. He saw a connection between engagement and successful student artwork. The more engaged a student was, the more likely the student was to produce high quality work. To engage students so that they produce good work, a good teacher would choose lessons that are “engaging and interesting that have an end product that’s attainable, but also has a range of difficulty levels depending upon- I try to pick things that a kid can-that, for example, a student who has a lesser degree of ability, can still be successful with. Yet a student who’s really a high achiever can take to another degree of complexity.”

Inigo found that for him, lesson planning was one way to ensure that he taught engaging topics in a structured way so that his students liked what they were doing and could be successful. He acknowledged that teaching successfully came down to how “carefully you’ve thought things out and how well you present the material. I mean I think a combination of the two things can make a big difference.” It is also important that a good teacher has a passion for what he/she is doing and to be able to build a relationship with the students, “I think the most important thing is when you’re passionate about the kids, passionate about teaching, you have to really care about what it is you’re trying to communicate and you have to care about student success.” Inigo also thought, however, a
teacher could engage students by building “a relationship with those kids.” The students have to know that their teacher cares, he suggested, and a teacher had to express interest in them as individuals. “You have to be able to listen to what they’re trying to tell you, even if what they’re tellin’ you you don’t agree with. You still have to be able to listen.”

***SHOULDERS AND STEAK***

While I was in Inigo’s classroom I learned two fun facts:

1) He loves to eat meat.
2) His bicepts are so big that he cannot make his hands touch his shoulders.

The students learned these facts too.

Along with teaching, Inigo is a practicing artist. In the semester I conducted my interview, Inigo was preparing for an exhibition of his artworks at a local community arts center. He said he often worked on his own projects in his classroom so that his students “don’t see him as one-dimensional, and I love doin’ all of it anyway.” Inigo linked working on his own projects with teaching, “I think in order for me to have any validity in talking to the kids and saying, ‘Art is important. Art is really important. You need to be passionate about your art. You need to love your art. You need to really care about what you make and put time and energy into it.’ If they don’t see me do that then I have really no leg to stand on. I’m not willing to ask the kids to do anything that I’m not willing to do. I think that also, my enthusiasm for the subject and for the media and for art in
general- I think that that’s infectious, to be quite honest. I think a lot of my kids see that I think it helps to kind of get them more passionate about what they do.”

For Inigo, being a good teacher meant helping his students be successful in the classroom. He believed this could be accomplished by being passionate about his subject. For him, this meant working on his own art and modeling the behavior he desired from his students through his own actions. It also meant thinking carefully about the lessons he taught, making sure he met his students’ needs, and helping guide them to success. A good art teacher was someone who could reach students through innovative lesson plans and building personal relationships, because once the students have buy in, they will be more likely to create good artwork.

***THAT ISN’T PRACTICAL***

I worked on my MA degree while teaching high school ceramics. For the most part, I liked all my classes. I like learning new things that, sometimes, I could apply to my class. I even tried to share some of the articles and books I read in class with my teaching colleagues. That was like smacking my head into a brick wall. They didn’t say I was crazy, but with every copied article I handed them, they smiled politely, only to place the papers on their desks and never look at them again. The problem, I found, was that the readings were just not friendly for these teachers. The teachers had a lot to do. And the research articles are not the most easy things to read. So, they didn’t, for the most part.

Honestly, I thought the same thing too. If I didn’t have to read an article for a class assignment, I think I’d be doing what my colleagues did.

Which seemed sad. The articles really did have good ideas. There really were concepts that could have improved what we were doing.

The problem was, most of the articles I gave them weren’t reader friendly. They were not written for teachers, just about them.
Summary.

The idealized good art teacher resides at the center of my proposed process of identity construction. For the teachers in this study, their idealized art teachers were versions of the types of art teachers they wanted to be. Each teachers’ understanding of what it meant to be a good art teacher was based upon their individual experiences as students and teachers. It was from the stories of success and failure, and of good teachers and bad teachers, they painted portraits of “the idealized good art teacher.” This idealized-self acted as a guide and a measuring stick as the teachers engaged in identity work in the four steps of my proposed identity construction process. In the next four sections of this chapter I present each of the four steps of this process using participant stories as examples to illustrate each of the following steps: choosing teaching practices, evaluating those practices, identifying problems within those practices, and selecting strategies to confirm, assert, or defend an identity.

Teaching practice.

I am proposing an identity construction process that contains four steps. The first step in this process is Teaching Practices. In this step the teachers in this study made pedagogical decisions and choose their teaching practices. By teaching practices I mean the act of selecting, designing, and implementing lessons; designing and implementing classroom management; designing and using assessments; and choices about how to interact with others including students,
administrators, and parents. As the teachers created or chose, and then taught
lessons, designed and implemented their classroom management plans, assessed
student work, and interacted with students and others, on a daily basis, they were
engaging in identity work (Snow & Anderson, 1987) by taking actions to try to
become their ideal teacher self. The choices these teachers made were guided by
their understandings of what it meant to be a good art teacher (their idealized
good art teacher). The following are examples of the types of practices the
teachers in this study engaged in to try to become the type of art teachers they
wanted to be.

**Welcome to Sal’s. What’ll you have?**

Sal’s idealized good art teacher was someone who created engaging
lessons because he believed that when his students were excited about what they
were doing, they would do a good job on their assignments. To Sal, an engaging
lesson was one that the students’ valued. To create a lesson the students valued,
he left his assignments open ended, provided only basic guidelines, and let the
students create artworks which appealed to their individual tastes.

In order to “be” a good teacher as he understood it, Sal designed his
lessons in a way that would help him achieve his goal. He explains,

> I think I know what kind of assignments they like and I think you have to
give assignments that the kids- that are valuable. This is the thing: my
student teacher, she’s given some things like masks or, there’re certain
projects that some of the class will like and some of the class won’t like.
That’s another reason why I like to leave it as open as possible, because

98
there’s so many varieties of tastes where I want you to really like what you’re doing. I think I’m good at that.

Here’s your few constraints. You have to work within these three different criteria, but then you can do anything. Let me show you. Here’s an example here. Here’s a different example. Same assignment, but look. Here’s all the different ways you could do it or several different ways, just so you see.” I think that I’m in tune with what kids like and givin’ ‘em assignments that they feel are valuable. I ask the kids, like, “Hey, how do you like this? Which way do you prefer it?” They’re like, “I like it that way.”

Sal structured his AP Art and Design class in an open-ended way. Instead of giving his students a series of required projects, Sal designed a system in which his students worked from a “menu.” At the beginning of the semester he gave his students a list of projects from which to choose. These projects ranged from very structured assignments to very open ended ones. Each day the students worked on an assignment, they could earn up to 25 points; a project that took two days to complete was worth up to 50 points, and one that took two weeks to complete would be worth 250 points. The students were required to earn a certain number of points by the end of the semester by choosing their own assignments from the menu.

As a student, Sal shared that he had the right temperament for art. One of the experiences he remembers most fondly was the way his high school art teacher let him explore materials with very few requirements. He expressed frustration in situations where his creativity was constrained. As a teacher, Sal believed lessons needed to be engaging, and one way to engage students was to allow them to have choice in what they were creating. Sal made the pedagogical
choice to design his lessons and the scope and sequence of his semester, in an
open-ended, student-choice style. This, he believed, would create the student
engagement he felt was necessary to being a good art teacher.

**Inigo takes the stage.**

For Inigo engaging lessons were essential to his understanding of what it
meant to be a good teacher because he, like Sal, believed that students were more
likely to work and enjoy art class if they were engaged in what they were doing.
For Inigo, writing an engaging lesson meant finding something that the students
were interested in. When I asked him about how he chose what he would teach:

I try to choose things that have some flexibility in that respect, but interest
is huge. It’s gotta be something the kids find interesting. I’m not gonna
make ’em slave away for four weeks on something that they hate. You
know you’re not gonna build your program that way. You know primarily
it’s about trying to find something that still covers what you need to do
and yet is also interesting.

Inigo actively worked to get his students engaged by designing his lessons to be
fun by catching and holding their interest. When discussing the AP Art History
class he teaches every few semesters, he explained:

[Art history is] art in the dark so often. It’s just click, click, click, but I
mean I try to teach it very differently than that. I mean you have to
obviously do a lot of lecture ’cuz it’s art history, and the AP exam is all
art, ever….I try to make it a lot more engaging.

Well, one of the best things, of course you tell every little dirty story about
all the artists that you know.

I do a lot of kinda’ fun, goofy activities for reviews and we do
JEOPARDY! reviews, obviously and I’m gonna give you one example.
When I introduced the very first unit of the year on prehistoric art—so I’m showing them slides of Lascaux and Chauvet and all these different caves and talking about the paintings. I look at the kids and I look at the paintings and I say, “You know what? It is so hard to really get a feel for these just looking at slides. It would be so much better if we could actually go into a cave and see these.” Then I take them into a cave. Because I take, actually, one of the rooms over here and I block out the lights and I have covered the entire interior with butcher paper and I hang up drawings that I’ve done in pastel, of all, and they’re copies of all of the different— you know the bulls from Lascaux— and we go in flashlight. We walk around with a flashlight and look at the different cave paintings.

It’s goofy but the kids get really— You know it certainly captures their attention.

The look on their face when I say, “We’re gonna go to a cave,” is always pretty—you know they just look very, “Mr. Montoya lost it. He’s crazy.”

Throughout his interview Inigo shared the tricks he used in his classroom to keep his students engaged. He explained that during a project on Moché Stirrup Vessels his students became “really interested when we started talking about human sacrifice, of course.” He also shared that to keep his students engaged he does:

…a lot of stupid voice impressions and stuff. I mean I’ll slip into a Scottish accent out of nowhere- German or Russian- and it’s goofy but it gets their attention. All of a sudden you just slip into [changes to an Indian accent], “Excuse me but why are you not paying attention?” They think it’s pretty hysterical, so little silly things like that…. You have to have absolutely no fear of humiliating yourself in front of a group of teenagers.

Inigo’s ideas about the importance of engaging lessons were influenced by his experiences as a student. While sharing some of his best memories of school, he described a university level professor whom he considered to be a good art teacher. This instructor made the lessons in his class challenging and fun. As a
student, Inigo found that this combination motivated him to work exceptionally hard, and also “learn so much from it too.” His concept of an engaging lesson was also influenced by his successful prior teaching experiences. Inigo explained how he worked at a home improvement store while in college. He became a certified nursery-professional in order to obtain a one dollar an hour raise, and as a result the manager assigned him to teach many of the “how to” classes at his store. In his classes he used attention grabbing techniques, such as blowing things up with pool chemicals. As a result, his classes in the store were always full.

***THE SHELF OF DUH***

As I wandered through Inigo’s classroom during my observations, I noticed that near the kilns there was a metal shelf, taller than me. Upon it sat a large, maybe two foot tall, bisque fired fish sculpture. The fish's tail was non-existent. The fish just ended in a jagged broken off nub. On the other shelves there were pots, vases, and sculptures in various states of completion.

Then there was a laminated sign that read:

THE SHELF OF DUH!

The work on this shelf has something seriously wrong with it.
It will not be fired until it is signed, fixed, dryfooted, etc.
See Mr. Montoya!

For Inigo, being a good teacher meant his students were engaged and enjoyed what they were doing and learning. He felt this could best be achieved by making relevant lessons that caught and held his students’ attention. In his class,
he chose to interact with students in ways he felt would most effectively engage them. He set up elaborate lessons by transforming his classroom into a cave, told jokes, and talked in silly accents. He wasn’t afraid to humiliate himself in front of his students, as long as it meant being a good teacher.

*Lily and the staple gun.*

When I asked Lily about how she would describe the qualities a good teacher had, she replied, “Organized, because every teacher should know where they want to take the students every single day. Even if it's a work day, you know where the kids should end up.” Organization was crucial because it meant having well planned lessons and clear goals for assessment in the classroom. To become this type of teacher Lily worked on the scope and sequence of her lessons, building skills upon one another, eventually resulting in student autonomy in the final project.

At the beginning, it's more structured, just so that they know what they're doing. I started with the line assignment contours, so they were like, “Oh, my God, we're gonna draw each other.” Then by the end, they're like “ah,” but we use pencil, charcoal, ink, just to see. Then for their final project, I let them choose what they wanted to use. They could use whatever they felt they did best in—in ink, charcoal or pencil. Then they had to do big [drawings], they had to have two bodies and three sets of hands. Then we did just abstract design on them all, and they turned out awesome.

In this example, Lily is talking about how, over the course of her semester, she guided her students from simple lessons to more challenging assignments. She
started with basic techniques and media, such as contour drawings with pencil, and worked her way up to more challenging assignments, such as acrylic paintings of any subject the student chose.

Along with organization helping a teacher to structure lessons so that students could be successful, Lily believed that organization also provided her with good classroom management. She explained that she is always “thinking about what can the kids do, rather than me do, for clean up. Then when the clean up bell rings, everyone knows what's expected. I don't have to walk around or bark at 'em, you know.”

Her focus on organization and management also allowed her to develop trust with her students. Lily described how, when her students get to the painting unit in her drawing and painting class, she has them build and stretch their own canvases.

Some of the teachers are like, “Are you seriously gonna give them staple guns?” I was like, “Yes.” I mean, if you don't- but if you never trust people or if you never trust, especially kids, they're never gonna be trustworthy. If you never give them the opportunity to actually work and use the staple gun correctly, then those are the kids that will grab it off your desk and shoot people. They don't hurt. Then I take away the project if anything ever happens; but honestly, I've never taken it away from any student…. They want to do that. They want something that looks like a real painting and they don't want that taken away.

For Lily, organization was key to being a good art teacher. As a student she recalled disliking the classes with teachers who were not organized because, “I don’t really remember learning anything from them; you know what I mean?”

With organization she felt, came classroom management, and the ability to trust
the students. Lily chose teaching practices such as structuring the scope of her lessons over the course of a semester and letting her students stretch their own canvases, in order to become her idealized good art teacher.

***THE PRACTICES OF A GOOD RESEARCHER***

To me, a good researcher is someone who loves what they do.

I chose a topic that was really important to me. I chose one that came directly from my own experience. A very challenging experience, and an experience I knew I wasn’t alone in. Other teachers, my friends, my colleagues, had been through similar situations.

*Marley goes for a run.*

Marley spent the year prior to the interview teaching art at an elementary school in a large urban city in the midwest. Her conception of a good art teacher was someone who cared about and could relate to his/her students. She consistently discussed the ways in which she built relationships with her students by participating in activities that went above and beyond those simply related to teaching art. In one story she shared with me, she described how sponsoring a running club allowed her to build relationships with the students because “they knew that I was there for them.”

Well. I end up- I did “Girls on the Run” last year. It’s like a after school deal…Like it’s supposed to be like a group talk and then you do running or games that involve cardio. Then they have a 5K race downtown. Well, our kids never get to go downtown even though they live literally like 12 miles from downtown. They just don’t get to see and they don’t get to do these things, so it’s a big deal, and they have bands play and all these other schools come. I like, “Three miles is kinda far,” and so they actually

105
did...I had a buncha other girls, and I turn around, and all of a sudden we’d have just a buncha kids.

Because it looked like we were havin’ fun and we were talkin’, and like I would give piggyback rides to some of ‘em and whatever. That helped me build like a really great- like kids knew that I was there for them....

I had one family- I had a kindergartner who did the race. Like her mom signed off, but I’d walk them home every day. I’d have to tell my school where I was going cuz I mean there’s liquor stores and there’s- I mean it’s what you see on the movies. That’s what’s there. I would go walk them home, drop them off. Their dad would be there to throw the keys out of the top window. Wouldn’t even come down, he had to throw the keys out of the top window. These three kids, I just love them. When we did the 5K- this is a side story, but, the kindergartner, I knew it was gonna happen too.

I knew—because they were so excited about seeing all these people. When they saw the first few busses by us, they were like, “Miss Coe, why are all these people white?” I’m like, “It’s okay. It just happens to be where we’re at. There’s gonna be thousands of people there.” Like, “It’s gonna be really good. It’s okay.” Then when they got there and all this was goin’, they were like dancin’. When our heat goes, she takes off in a dead sprint, and thank goodness- like I had a couple teachers...

...luckily my friend and then she got a couple other people to help cuz I mean I had girls, I was like, because I have kids who can run, and they’re gonna run the whole thing. Then I have kids that are gonna walk almost the whole thing, which is fine. I was like- and then I have this little runner. She took off in a dead sprint. I was like, “She’s gonna wear out in just a second,” and so Robin went with her and caught up with her.

Then I had a CamelBak cuz it ended up being real hot that day and they weren’t used to it. I would just make sure, and I had Gatorade, and I’d make sure I, I just kept running back and forth making sure I knew where everybody was at. Then the kindergartner I end up carrying. Like for at least half of it, at least half. She was dancin’, and then they got medals at the end and stuff. The next day, I was like, “My arms are so sore,” and like, “ah....”

Marley’s story isn’t just about this one race or this one after school club. Her use of the word “kids” to describe her students indicates the type of relationship she
feels she has with these students, they are more than just her students in the classroom, they are like family. The section of this story in which Marley discusses walking the kindergartner home after school, confirms the importance of her relationships with her students and demonstrated how she chose to engage in specific actions to become her ideal good art teacher.

***THE BUDDHA***

I interviewed Marley at her house. In one corner sat a large Buddha statue. It was wearing sunglasses and a necklace. She told me that one of her students gave them to her for the Buddha.

During her interview Marley also shared how she makes birthday cards for her students.

And I make birthday cards for-like if I know it’s their birthday, like they’ve made it a thing or whatever, then to me that kinda says that they need somebody to care about it kind of a thing, so I do make birthday cards for them. I did a poetic justice one for Nathanial. King Kevin, he likes mafia stuff, so that is a whole ‘nother- so, yeah, I just- yeah. Shoes for Anthony, and then he put it- I didn’t know it, but other kids told me he put it on Instagram…Yeah. Like cuz you know I’m like, they’re in high school, I don’t know if a birthday card or whatever, but King Kevin was the first one I did it to, and he taped it on his shirt and wore it around the whole day.

For Marley, being a good teacher meant making connections with her students so they knew she cared. One of her first experiences with teaching, Marley recalled, was working with a woman who told her that she should never spend her own money on classroom art supplies. This frustrated her and she shared, “don’t take this [teaching] on if that’s like- these are your kids is my opinion.” In order to be
the type of good art teacher she believed she should be, Marley chose to sponsor extra-curricular clubs, walk her students home from school, and make birthday cards for kids who “needed somebody to care.” As she did this she actively constructed her identity as a good art teacher.

Roxanne makes it personal.

Roxanne worked in an urban high school with a high population of immigrant and refugee students. She discussed how “poverty is a big struggle” for the students she taught and that many of them depended on the school to provide for their basic needs such as clothes and food. Roxanne believed that because of their life circumstances, some of her students may not have education as their first priority. She shared, “…if you don’t know where your next meal is coming from, how important is education?” Therefore, Roxanne believed that she should try to reach the students in a way that went beyond academics. She wanted to “address their heart and soul” so that her students could make a connection with their new culture and with their personal identities. When I asked her about how she decided what to teach in her classroom, she explained, “I try to tie it back to something that’s going to— that they feel like connects personally in some way.”

Roxanne affirmed her belief in the importance of making lessons relate to the students many times during the interview. While comparing the work in her class to the state wide high school graduation assessment she said:
You’re gonna be writing an artist’s statement that reflects what’s required on that HSCE exam, but you’re not getting some random prompt. You’re writing about something that really matters. Because it’s about you, you don’t have to do any research, really. You have to do some introspection…. I just try to make it more personal and make it more meaningful.

In order to do this, Roxanne chose to structure her teaching practices in ways that allowed her students to be introspective and reflect on their own lives, ideas, and the visual world. When I asked her how she helps students who are struggling with poverty she discussed a lesson she was teaching.

I try to, like right now, I have a project where it’s an identity project and they’re learning about symbolism, so they’re learning about drawing and everything, but it’s mostly about examining who you are, and then coming up with a visual way of expressing that. They develop ideas for symbols, but first they have to explore, who are you? What do you care about? What do you believe?.... What’s important to you? Then developing symbols that represent those ideas. It’s like you don’t have to pour your heart out. You don’t have to rip it all open and let everybody know, because symbols can be very explicit, or they can be very secret. They can be very mysterious. As long as you know what it means and you can express that.

Later in the interview, Roxanne returned to this same lesson plan and explained how in the lesson the students first trace each others’ silhouettes onto a sheet of white drawing paper.

Then they develop images about like what’s on the inside, what’s so intensely personal about your memories, and your beliefs, and your hopes, and your dreams that stuff that’s just you. Those symbols go on the inside. Then, what’s the world around you and the things that influence you, and the people, and relationships, and activities, and interests, and things like that, and cultural things. Those are kind of the ideas that they are developing and using.
In these two passages from Roxanne’s interview, she explains how she chose to structure her assignments in ways that actively help her try to become her idealized teacher self. She designed lessons in which the students explored basic art concepts (drawing, graphite) and connected their work to their lives (adding symbols that have personal meaning). In the first passage she even leaves the idea of “symbol” open-ended so that her students could connect with their work at a level with which they felt comfortable.

***MORE PRACTICES OF A GOOD RESEARCHER***

It wasn’t enough for me to just pick a meaningful topic. A good researcher also needed to reach the people they were trying to help.

So I am writing with this voice. And I am including the voices, the words, of the teachers.

**Summary.**

In the Teaching Practices step of my proposed identity construction process, the teachers made pedagogical choices about how and what to teach, how to interact with their students, and how to manage their classrooms. Their idealized teacher selves served as guide to make their choices. The next step in this process, Evaluation of Practice, occurred when the teachers evaluated their teaching practices to determine how effective their choices had been in helping them achieve their desired identities.
Evaluation of practice.

In my proposed process of identity construction, the teachers in this study actively worked towards becoming their idealized good art teacher by first making choices about their teaching practices. After making and implementing those choices, such as teaching specific lessons or interacting with students in deliberate ways, the teachers engaged in the second step, Evaluation of Practice. This step occurred when the teachers examined their teaching practices to determine whether their practices were having the desired effects. While evaluating their practice, the teachers looked for certain indicators that would tell them whether they had been successful or not. The method the teachers used to evaluate their practices depended on which practice they were measuring. For example, in order to evaluate whether their lesson plans had resulted in the students knowing a specific technical skill, the teachers may choose to evaluate their practice through an assessment of the students’ artwork. However, if a teacher wanted to evaluate a lesson plan to see whether it had successfully engaged students, teachers may evaluate their practice by observing the students during class. The indicators teachers looked for were also related to the practice being evaluated. The indicators that tell a teacher a student has learned a desired technical skill may differ from those that indicate a student was engaged in the learning process. These indicators came from inside the classroom, such as students’ actions or reactions, as well as from outside sources, such as evaluator
feedback or awards given to students at art exhibitions. The following are examples of how some of the teachers evaluated their practices.

***WAS I ACTUALLY GOOD?***

Just because I made these choices, just because I’d chosen to write about something I was passionate about, just because I included a reflective voice and just because I’d included the words of the participants, was I really being a good researcher? Were these choices having the effect I’d hoped they would?

*Bronwyn observes.*

Bronwyn believed that it was important for students in her classroom to learn certain art knowledge and techniques. She structured her lessons in ways that would both engage students and allow each student to create a successful work of art. To figure out whether her lessons were successful, Bronwyn used observations to evaluate her practices, looking for the indicators of student engagement (their actions and reactions during the lesson). She said:

I kinda gauge their reactions. I like it if they like their project, because obviously that will make them more engaged while they’re doing it…. Yeah, are they able to do it? Cuz if they’re not into the project, then that usually has to do with interest. It’s not gonna turn out good. I think that’s a good, you can kinda gauge that, whether or not they’re into something.

Later in the interview, Bronwyn expanded on the importance of observation in the process of evaluation of her practices. She found that observations allowed her to gauge her students’ progress more effectively than assigning traditional letter grades.
I think, in a studio class, what throws me with the grades, if I just looked at their grades, a lot of kids don’t turn stuff in. I know that they’re getting it. I see them working in class. I know that they understand it, but something didn’t happen. Either they didn’t finish it, or something happened and they didn’t turn it in. If I just look at the class’s average, it’s not really gonna help me find out if they’re really successful, because although their grade might be very low, they could be getting the information. They’re just not turning anything in. That’s kinda frustrating, I think, with a studio class. Every day I know where my students stand, just from looking at what they’re doing as a daily thing.

She also looked for the students’ behaviors and reactions to gauge whether or not they actually understood the content.

You can also tell a lot by the noise level in your class. If your class is really loud, probably what you’re teaching isn’t working. I guess it depends what you’re teaching, but in art class, if they’re engaged, it tends to be a little quieter…. If they understand it, they’ll take off with it. They’re just drawing away.

She knew when she’d had an unsuccessful lesson because “I get those blank stares that are like, looking at me like I just spoke Chinese…. That’s that look with their head tilted.”

Bronwyn’s goal was to ensure her students learned specific content knowledge and techniques. She evaluated her practice by observing her students’ reactions and their overall progress on a daily basis. She could tell her students understood when she saw indicators in their behavior such as if they were diligently and quietly working on their assignments. She also knew they did not understand the content when they reacted with blank stares. Bronwyn also believed that looking for reactions and day to day progress was more telling than
grades, because some students may demonstrate their understanding in their work, but never actually turn in their work.

*Kat examines artwork.*

Kat believed that reaching her students on a personal level was the key to getting them motivated and making successful artworks. To Kat, success meant her students’ artworks looked good because this indicated the students understood the concepts she was teaching.

Kat looked for indications that her students understood the content and created good quality artwork by examining their finished projects. During the interview she told me about a project she worked on in which the students painted a self portrait using the style of the artist, Chuck Close. During her story she explained:

> We did it with colored pencils, and I have a couple of those examples that I could show you if you want. I said, a lot of kids got it, and then the other half of the class didn’t…. Now that I’ve been a couple more years teaching, I said, ‘Okay, I really like that, some of them turned out really awesome in junior high. Cuz they had all that drawing and all the proportion. They had all that great….

In her story about the Chuck Close project, Kat indicated that by looking at her students’ work she could tell they had successfully been able to understand proportion and the drawing techniques she had taught. Those artworks that showed proper facial proportions were indicators that her students understood the concepts as she was teaching, while works with disproportioned faces told her
they did not. The work and its quality were indicators of the effectiveness of Kat’s practice.

Inigo gets mail.

Inigo believed that if his students were engaged and knew he cared, they would leave his classroom knowing that art was accessible for them. He chose teaching practices he felt would do just that. He described talking in silly accents to keep his students’ attention, having his students play Jeopardy! to review content, turning his classroom into a cave to teach students about prehistoric art, and basing lessons on topics or artworks the students found interesting.

For me I think my primary goal is to change their world view a little bit about art, to make it accessible. Art should not be the realm of the unknown and the strange and things that I don’t comprehend. It should be something they’re comfortable with and familiar with. They should become, if nothing else, informed consumers. They should be familiar with the material and the media and enjoy it and have a means of self-expression. Like with my art history kids, one of my biggest goals there is they should feel like the museum is a place that they own. You know what I mean?

To evaluate his practice, Inigo looked for indicators that he reached his students and had an impact on them. One indicator that he reached his students was that they came back, years after they’d graduated, and told him he’d made a difference.

I had a girl, for example, from that [AP Art History class] go on to Harvard. She sends me postcards and stuff on a regular basis, but one of the ones she sent me mentioned that, said that this, my AP Art History class, was the single most influential class that she had in her entire high
school career and just totally changed her world view. For a kid who’s
goin’ on to Harvard and stuff, I mean that’s pretty significant.

Later in the interview, Inigo reiterated the role returning students played in his
evaluation of his practices.

‘Cuz a lot of kids look at museums and they’re like, “Ah, I don’t even
know what to do there. It’s scary.” Kids that leave my program with art
history, they go to museums all the time. I constantly get emails or
postcards and they say, “Hey, I just went to the Louvre,” or, “I just went
to- I was in Chicago and went and saw American Gothic.” They’re
sendin’ me pictures of them in museums and stuff, and so I know that
years and years after the fact, they’re still making art an active part of their
life, and that is gotta be my biggest goal.

In both of these instances, Inigo used long term feedback from his students to
evaluate his ability to reach them and show them that the arts have a place in their
lives. Some of his students sent him postcards from art museums, while others
came back and told him he’d made a difference.

*Lily gives quizzes.*

Lily wanted her students to learn certain art skills and certain art related
knowledge, such as vocabulary. Like Bronwyn, Kat, Lily evaluated her practice
by observing her students’ actions in class.

I think just when the kids get it, when they finally get it. It doesn’t matter
whether you're a classroom teacher or art teacher; when they finally get it,
it is, it's priceless. You see it on their face and you're like, so you
understand now how to get red violet, or you understand now how to
compute that math problem or whatever. Even when they come up and
actually say thank you, or when the pride that they show in a finished
project. You can tell they're just beaming.
She also knew that students were not learning what she had hoped when “there’s no buy in from the kids. The kids don’t- they don’t want to do it.”

Lily also evaluated her practices in formal ways. At the beginning of each class Lily used “bell work” (a small self-directed activity designed to get the students thinking about course content) to reinforce class ideas.

Then the bell work will be on the back [of the worksheet], and they've had to do different-representing the different color schemes with colored pencils, just doing triadic, analogous, whatever each day. I'll go over that with them, and they're like, you know. I'm like, “Well, you might as well get it taught again if you don't know what to do.”

Lily used other formal approaches to measure her students’ understanding of class topics.

They were showing me that they understood what these [terms] all meant, instead of writing the definition; which I always did that when I was a classroom teacher because a lot of the kids are like, “I know what it means, but I really can't tell you. I can't verbalize it.” I don't know. Even on their quizzes, it's like, I ask them, “What are neutrals?” What I'm looking for is non-color list colors; but if they write white, black, brown and gray, they've got it. You know what I mean? I know some teachers that are like, “No, they didn't say non-color those colors.”

From her comments, it is clear that Lilly uses both informal methods (observations) and formal (bell work, quizzes) to check for her students’ understanding. Indicators such as enthusiasm and verbal thank yous from students, as well as correctly identifying art concepts inform Lily of the effectiveness of her practices.
Christopher wins awards.

Many of the teachers in this study described very specific ways they evaluated very specific practices. The teachers explained how they knew whether a specific lesson had gone well, or whether they had reached their students on a personal level. Christopher, a jewelry and IB art teacher in his nineteenth year of teaching, was more general in describing how he evaluated his teaching, of how he knew whether he was being a good teacher or not. Christopher evaluated his quality as a teacher in terms of his overall experiences.

For Christopher, good teaching meant his students made good artworks. He talked about how he structured his lessons so that students had a choice in what they were making because he believed if the students were engaged and motivated the “rest is a breeze”. Choice, he believed, would give them motivation. Christopher explained that he divided the processes he taught into small steps that progressed in difficulty. He also staggered the introduction of new projects so that the projects overlapped, to account for the varied speeds and skills of the students in his class room. He shared:

We want to start out cutting metal. Then we want to add it to layers of metal. Then we want to add stones, and then we want to add color. Then what do we do with it on top of that? Lost wax casting.

I just put them all together, all the processes and said, “What makes the most natural progression?” We should step it in the order that it makes sense to do. We don’t want to do bezel setting before they’ve learned to put two pieces of metal together. That doesn’t make any sense.
Towards the end of the interview, I asked Christopher whether he thought he was a good teacher. He told me that yes, he thought he was. His discussion of why he felt this way indicated that he relied heavily on indicators from external sources. Rather than looking at the things he saw in his classroom (though he did mention those as well during the interview), Christopher focused on indicators from outside the classroom such as awards he or his students won, his scores on his formal teacher evaluations, and feedback from other teachers and colleagues. He stated:

Yes [I am a good teacher] because people tell me I am. [Laughter]. I act arrogant sometimes like know it all, you know, I know everything. I tell my kids I’m perfect all the time. I’m perfect. I’m the best jewelry teacher you’ve ever had. They’re like, “Whatever Mr. Pinkerton.”… but in reality I’m very self-critical about the way I teach and about what I do and how good these kids are getting what they need. You know if I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing.

I always tell my colleagues and stuff I go, “I’m just trying to keep up with the rest of you guys.” Several of them say, “You’re dreaming. You’re doing awesome. Everything you do is great.”

We have an evaluation process scored one through four. I have eleven fours and ten threes…. That’s highly effective. We have ineffective, developing, effective and highly effective. I’m highly effective. I don’t know I guess I’m doing all right.

I’ve wanted to be hired wherever I’ve gone. They want me to be there so. Other teachers have wanted to come into my program. When I was student teaching at Canyon Cliffs High School when I got this job here I became Department Chair the second year I was here like I said. She wanted to come over desperately, “Christopher get over there please.”
Christopher’s explanation of why he believed he is a good teacher focused on external indicators of quality. In this passage he mentioned other people’s comments, his evaluation score, and his ease in obtaining employment.

***THAT WAS FUN***

While in Christopher’s jewelry classroom I noticed an award from Student Services behind his desk. It was for being an outstanding teacher. Christopher told me it was for his work with the students from the special education department. “That was fun” he said about receiving the award.

Christopher’s focus on external indicators of quality were not limited to his response to just my interview question regarding if he believed he was a good art teacher. Throughout his interview, Christopher referred to parent and colleague comments:

She [another art teacher in his district] was like, “Christopher these are your good kids you’ve gotta take good care of them.” After that got settled she was like, “You’re doing fantastic. We’ll send all the great kids your way.”

Anyway, there was this group of kids and they were phenomenal. Their parents did not want the Drawing and Painting teacher, not the current one, but our old one to teach them. They said, “We want Christopher Pinkerton teaching our kids.” They went to the principal and the principal was like, “Well, he doesn’t teach a Drawing and Painting class.” They said, “We don’t care. We want him to teach our kids.” Figure that out.

We all got together and talked about it and we decided that I would teach, they could get credit for a 7:00 class, and I would have to be here. I just wouldn’t get paid for it. I said, “Okay.”

For three years I had this group of kids that were phenomenal. There were about five of them. We had a couple kids come in and out and so forth, but there were about five that were the core.
Christopher also referred to awards his students won in art exhibitions:

We entered a Congressional Show for three years. We placed first the first year, first and second the second year, and third and first the third year with this group of kids. The Congressional one’s the one where if you win they hang your work in the Halls of Congress. By the third year when I showed up with my kids they were talking about me when we’d come in and I’d bring my artwork in from the kids and they would be talking to the other teachers, “Oh that’s the school that won the last two years.”

Then again with a story about the district art exhibition:

The first year I went to the District Art Show and we took our stuff and they went, “Oh you’re from Canyon Cliffs High School. You can just put your stuff over there. You guys usually don’t win anyway.”

I was like, “Excuse me?” The next year we bought silver and I said “We will win guys so here’s what we’re gonna do.” We stepped up our game quite a bit and by the second or third year we were always placing first or second in the art show. Now I expect us to place first, second or third.

By the third year we were placing and the girl that I told you about, the Special Ed girl that was only in here all the time. At our district show when she put her stuff it won Best of Show. Not best jewelry; Best of Show. Better than all the paintings. We’re talking 200, 300 plus pieces of artwork in the district.

Christopher referred to awards he won:

Oh and speaking of Special Ed, I have a Student Services Award I got for Outstanding Teacher dealing with students that have Special Eds and have special needs and sort of the Special Ed population. That was fun…. I went to a banquet and they have you come up and shake hands with the superintendent. Yeah. You get a whole crowd. It was fun.

While Christopher also discussed how he checks his students’ engagement with a project by observing them in the classroom, his main focus for evaluating his practices, for determining whether he was “being a good art teacher,” came
from external sources in the form of praise for himself and his students. While these indicators may not have confirmed success or failure in specific aspects of his teaching, they provided him with an overall measurement of his perceived quality.

***WAS IT WORKING?***

I want to be the kind of researcher who is passionate. I want my writing to be good, to be engaging, to be useful to the teachers I came from and care about. But were my choices really working?

While writing my dissertation, I showed the in-process chapters to other people. First I gave it to my advisor. She told me, at least with the first two chapters, that they were “enjoyable to read.” She even passed the first chapter, to her brother, a retired teacher who said, “I don't know this person but I believe he/she understands the problem very well.”

Yahoo, I thought to myself. I was being successful. I was a good researcher.

Then I gave an early version of a chapter to a friend, a teacher. It was this chapter, the findings, the part about identity theory. After reading it she asked me questions. Her questions led me to believe she did not understand what I had written. Eventually, she admitted she didn’t really get what I was trying to say. She told me what I had written was confusing, unclear, and seemed to contradict itself.

Damn. Maybe I wasn’t being successful.

Summary.

In this step of my proposed identity construction process, the teachers evaluated their practices looking for indicators that let them know the effectiveness of their teaching practices. They measured their effectiveness against their idealized good art teacher. If, in order to be a good art teacher as they understood it, teachers should do certain things, by evaluating their practice
they could locate indicators of whether they had successfully done those things. Once teachers had evaluated their practice, and determined the extent of their effectiveness, they could engage in the next step of the process, Problem Identification.

**Problem identification.**

In my proposed process of identity construction the teachers first chose practices to help them become the kind of art teachers they wanted to be. Next they evaluated those practices looking for indicators of the effectiveness of their choices. After choosing and evaluating their teaching practices, the teachers engaged in the third step in the identity construction process, Problem Identification. In this step the teachers identified the reasons that the practice was or was not successful in helping them become their idealized good art teacher. If their choices were successful, the teachers could determine that they were doing the things that a good art teacher would do, thereby confirming their identity.

However, if the teachers determined their practices had not achieved the desired results, they attempted to identify the reasons, or problems, that caused the less than desirable outcome. Some teachers were able to identify very specific problems to very specific situations, such as why a particular lesson was not successful. At other times, the teachers identified more general problems related to their overall goal of becoming the type of teacher they wanted to be. These problems became challenges to the teachers’ ideal good teacher identities because
the problems were things that got in the way of them becoming that which they wished to be. For example, if teachers’ conceptions of the ideal good art teacher indicated that their students should be able to produce high quality artwork, and through evaluation they realized the students’ work was not the quality they desired, teachers were not able to achieve the things good art teachers should be able to achieve (students who made good art).

**Miss M earns respect.**

For Miss M, building personal relationships with her students was a very important part of being the kind of teacher she wanted to be. She described butting heads with a colleague who “didn’t give the kids a whole lot of freedom…. I kind of treat my students like they’re adults, basically, I give them respect and I expect respect back, I guess.”

Miss M believed she successfully built relationships with her students based on feedback she received *from* the students. While discussing her best memories as a teacher, Miss M shared an experience when a student from her class was moved to another ceramics class with a different teacher.

I like talking to the kids, and I like kinda like developing those relationships with them. I like the fact that they really do respect me, and they trust me. They talk to me about a lot of things. The other day, I had one of my students, she got taken out of my class. They changed her schedule, so she’s outta my class and she’s got the other ceramics teacher now. The other ceramics teacher came to me and was like, “You used to have this girl, right?” I was like, “Yeah.” The ceramics teacher was like, “She’s terrible. She’s got a attitude. She doesn’t wanna be in my class.” I was like, “Yeah, she’s kind of rough, but once you can get past that,
she’s a really talented artist.” This teacher was like, “Yeah, whatever.” Kinda like blew it off and was like, “That’s never gonna happen.”

That girl, the very next day, I was in a meeting at lunch, but I came back from my meeting and I looked down on my desk. There’s a little note that says, “Miss, I miss you.” They just call you miss, you know? She’s like, “Love, Jasmine.” I was like, aw, that’s so cool. Stuff like that, I guess.

In this situation, Miss M found that her practices, the way she interacted with her students, resulted in a relationship with this student. Through an evaluation of her practices (her interactions with the student), Miss M found that there was no problem in this situation. The indicators of her success came in the form of a note from her former student. In this situation, Miss M used this student’s feedback to confirm her identity as a good teacher; her classroom practices (how she interacted with her students) allowed her to be the type of teacher she wanted to be (one that built relationships with her students). Miss M identified that there was no challenge to her identity based on this interaction with her student and her colleague.

***FACE POTS AND PEPPER SHAKERS***

Miss M and I have become friends on a social networking site. Often times I see posts of her students’ artworks. Wheel thrown pots with faces carved into them. Salt and pepper shakers that look like Twinkie shaped creatures in blue overalls. The posts usually have comments like, “look at these awesome things my students made.”
Sal is honest.

Sal wanted his students to be engaged and do their best in his classroom. To do this, Sal tried to make sure the students could work on projects that they were interested in. He provided flexibility to account for their different interests and the different speeds at which the students worked. He left lessons open-ended for students who preferred a more exploratory approach to artmaking, and gave parameters for those who worked best with a more structured lesson. Sal explained, “All right. I’m gonna have to make sure that I really do expect quality and that my kids can really get quality.”

To evaluate his practice and measure the extent to which he achieved his goal of getting his students to be engaged and put in their best effort, Sal observed his students during class time and examined their work in group critiques and student-teacher conferences. He explained that as he looked at the students’ work he could tell who had done the work and who hadn’t. When Sal found that his practice was not successful, and the students’ work was below the level it should have been, he found that he was not being his ideal teacher self.

***CLASS CRITIQUES***

One of the days I was in Sal’s classroom, he lead a class critique with his AP art students. They hung up their best work from the past five weeks on the wall in the hallway outside his room. We all sat against the opposite wall and began. He asked the students which works they thought were successful and why. Which ones could use improvement and why. He asked the students questions about techniques and color theory. And he asked them which ones they liked. The students talked, and smiled, and expressed frustrations, and explained their thinking.
While he did not cite a specific example, Sal identified potential reasons why his students’ work might reach the level he expected to see from students who were putting in their best effort. In some cases, Sal believed, that the problem may have been caused by his own actions, his own teaching practices. He shared:

I like being honest with the kids, so if I realize that whatever, the project was just a little bit beyond them or I didn’t present it clearly enough or whatever it is…or where is wasn’t that great an idea or here’s where I didn’t really communicate it clearly….

At other times, Sal believed the problem came from the students’ efforts. When I asked him about some of his biggest challenges as a teacher he replied:

Sloppiness. I guess what bothers me the most is when there’s a kid who’s super talented and doesn’t wanna refine their work. I have this kid right now. He’s so gifted. I mean he could just- in just a few minutes make somethin’ that is so incredible and then he doesn’t finish it. He doesn’t care; he doesn’t wanna smooth it out, doesn’t wanna do the job glazing or wherever it is.

In this case, Sal believed that the reason the students’ work was not at the quality he expected was because the students did not put in the amount of effort they could have.

Sal was able to identify different problems that caused his students to produce low quality work. Depending on the situation, Sal found that the problem may have been his own teaching practices but could also have been related to the students’ own efforts. Therefore, either his teaching choices or the students’ attitudes became challenges to his identity as a good art teacher.
Olivia’s big flop.

To Olivia, a good art teacher was someone who could push students creatively in order to get them to think outside the box. She explained that when she evaluated a lesson, she knew she had been successful:

…when the kids get into it [a lesson] and stop asking me to help them. Like they are just like, like they’re invested in them. When they get invested in them that’s a super awesome project. When they get invested in them and when they’re done they look awesome, that’s a super, super awesome project because they enjoyed doing it and they did a good job at it. If it’s the majority of kids in the lower functioning kids or the ones that who usually don’t care, like if you can hook some of the kids that don’t care and awesome projects will often help those kids who don’t care realize that they can do something cuz they cared for that moment. Then they actually achieve. I try and tell them if you put in your effort I will make you a good artist. I can do that if you put in your full effort.

In this passage Olivia explained how she knows she has successfully “hooked” her students into the project when she sees they are working diligently. Their reactions are the indicators that tell her to what extent her lesson has achieved her goals. When she does not see this reaction from the students, however, when they are not “invested” and “just working,” the projects, she says, “just flop.” When I asked Olivia to tell me about an unsuccessful project, she shared:

Some projects they struggle and the end product really wasn’t that impressive anyway. Sometimes it’s cuz I didn’t do a good job explaining it and so the next year I explain it much better. I realize at the end of it if I’d just done this differently it would be so much better. Or if I shift this or that and so I’ll- so there’s some projects that each year I’ll try to tweak it a little, little, little, little. Just kind of shift it around. There are other projects that, yeah, when I get to the end of it I was like that was a terrible idea; I should’ve never done that one. What a waste of time.
For Olivia, when a project flops it may have been the result of something she did or didn’t do. The cause of the problem may stem from her lesson design or the way she presented it. Olivia tried to balance her curriculum with projects that were very structured and some that were more open-ended and creative. However, recently she found that many of her creative projects had “been flopping big time and I don’t- it bothers me. It really bothers me.” Upon reflection she found that these projects had flopped because:

if it’s not immediate then the kids don’t have the patience to like get there…. Like they just- they literally don’t allow themselves- like they’re stunted. Like their creativity is stunted. Like it just- like they won’t go there. Like it’s pulling teeth to get them to like….

In this case, the students’ lack of patience and creativity is a challenge to Olivia’s identity as a good art teacher.

Like Sal, Olivia was able to identify different causes for her perceived success or failure with certain lessons. At times, the challenge to her identity came through her own fault, while at other times, the fault lay with the students and their perceived lack of willingness to open up and be creative.

Mrs. Reed’s new job.

Mrs. Reed believed that in her job as a middle school art teacher she was a good teacher. She built a quality art program with students who produced high quality work. The numerous accolades she received from colleagues and the community indicated that she was doing a great job. Parents donated money to her
program and told her they wanted her to be their child’s teacher. Her students won prizes in local competitions and she was awarded teacher of the year for her state. Her lessons were “solid” and she was able to keep her students motivated. As a result, the students produced excellent quality work.

After changing jobs to a high school in a neighboring school district, Mrs. Reed knew she wasn’t being as effective as she had once been. She shared, “Cuz you know I’ve been able to do it at the middle school. There’s no reason why I can’t do it here.” She felt that the students’ work ethic wasn’t the same at this level, because some of the lessons she’d been successful with in engaging students in the past, no longer worked. When I asked her if she’d written any new lessons since moving to the high school three years ago, she stated, “No. I’ve kept my old ones, but because I do all this other stuff, and the kids have gotten bored so easy.” She shared that the artworks coming from one of her classes “were horrible…just kids would take two days to do ‘em and they’d be done.” She had not yet developed rubrics to use the high school level, and she discussed struggling with her classroom management. Mrs. Reed lamented that “it helped me that the community that I was in, which I haven’t found very many people here yet…. I haven’t found those connections here yet, and those helped big time.”

When it came to identifying the cause of these problems, or what was getting in her way of her becoming the type of teacher she had once been, Mrs. Reed was able to identify a set of generalized causes. She was not evaluating one
specific problem, such as one failed lesson, rather she was evaluating her practice as a whole.

During the interview, Mrs. Reed referred, multiple times, to some of the causes of her problems. First, she linked her struggle to her new context. In her new job she was assigned five different courses to teach (ceramics, drawing, AP art, etc.). “Teaching Ceramics 1 and Ceramics 2 when there are two teachers that teach that here. I teach totally different, and having never really moved schools before.” She also reported that she hadn’t “met enough colleagues around here” and was struggling to fit in. In regards to her lack of using rubrics in the classroom, something she felt was essential to being a good teacher, she remarked, “…the other teachers don’t.” Mrs. Reed discussed how she and her colleagues taught very differently, and that at her new school, “They still don’t even have the curriculum updated to the new state standards.”

Secondly, Mrs. Reed attributed some of her struggle to her own personal life, her identity outside the classroom. When I asked if she ever reflected on her teaching practice, she replied:

I’m very hard on myself. I know what I need to do and I just need to do it. I need to find the time. The problem is now I have a grandbaby and I’m gonna have a second grandbaby, and my knees.

Mrs. Reed also felt that she was not meeting all of her own goals because she had been suffering from a number of health problems over the past few years, including knee reconstruction surgery.
I don’t want to be an easy class. I’ve never wanted, and I, I have been somewhat this year because of my health situations, but I thought that I would be a lot different this year than I actually have been from my first year. Next year, oh.

Mrs. Reed constructed her identity and attempted to become the type of art teacher she wanted to be, in this case was the kind of art teacher she had been before. When she realized she was not achieving this goal, she was able to identify some general problems or causes affecting her teaching. Mrs. Reed identified the context of her new job and her struggle to fit in with her new surroundings as well events in her personal life including health and family, as challenges to her identity as a good art teacher.

***TO BE OR NOT TO BE***

My adviser’s comments were awesome. After getting back an email I was excited. I had done what I wanted. The changes she suggested were minor ones, about grammar and word choice. I was a good researcher.

My friend’s comments, however, were not so good. I wasn’t able to make what I was writing about clear to her. So maybe it wouldn’t be clear to anyone. But why didn’t it work?

After reflecting on my writing, I found that the problem was, I wasn’t even sure what I was writing about. I was trying to make myself sound so smart by using big words like poststructuralism and performativity. I was trying to write about everything, every little thing, I found in my data. If I was unclear myself, it was no wonder my friend was too. In this case, I was most definitely NOT being a good researcher.

Summary.

As the teachers evaluated their practices and were able to determine the extent to which their practices had achieved their desired goals, they needed to
identify the reasons for either their successes or failures. These reasons served as either a confirmation of their teacher identities or a challenge to those identities. If the teachers were successful, the success confirmed that they were being good art teachers. If, however, the results were less than desired, the problems they identified became challenges to their identity. They problem stood in the way of being the idealized good art teacher. After identifying the challenges, the teachers could engage in the final step of my proposed process of identity construction, Strategy Selection.

**Strategy selection.**

While constructing their identities as good art teachers, the participants in this study first chose teaching practices, evaluated those practices, and identified the problems standing in the way of them becoming their idealized selves. After completing these first three steps, the teachers engaged in the final step, Strategy Selection. This step in my proposed identity construction process is related to whether or how well teachers felt that the outcomes of their evaluation of practice and the causes they identified, helped the teachers fulfill their identity of a good art teacher (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006).

If teachers found that their identities was not being fulfilled, or that their identities were threatened in some way, the teachers either reconstructed some aspect of their identities or worked to manage the incidents that threatened their identities (Day, et al., 2006). The teachers used strategies to reconstruct,
maintain, or manage their identities. A strategy is the way teachers choose to reconcile the differences or contradictions between what they want to be and what they achieved (Day, et al., 2006). The term strategy was used by other researchers in a similar manner. Woods and Anderson (1987) found that homeless men living on the streets of Austin, Texas, used different strategies to construct their identities. For example, some of the men they interviewed used the strategy of embracement when they confirmed, through talk and expression, their acceptance of their assigned social identity. Other homeless men, however, used distancing to push themselves away from the identities that differed from their desired self-concepts (what they preferred or wanted to be).

***THE BIG FIX***

I knew I'd been successful with one chapter, but not another. I knew I was being a good researcher at one point, but not at another point. How could I remedy this situation?

Troman and Woods (2001) found that primary school teachers, like homeless men, used strategies to manage their identities. In their study of primary school teachers in England, Woods and Toman found that when external factors, such as policy changes, lead to the redefining of what it meant to be a “teacher,” the teachers used strategies to adapt to these identity challenges. Their strategies included downshifting (the teachers took on a lower role than they previously had) and self-actualizing (the teachers tried to make the best of the changes) in order to “save and promote the self” (Troman & Woods, 2001).
Woods and Jeffrey (2002) and Woods, Jeffrey, Troman, and Boyle (1997) found that when the teacher identities of primary school teachers were challenged by policy changes, the teachers used identity work to either reconstruct or assert their identities. The teachers in their study used strategies such as game playing when they complied with the changes on a superficial level, not really embracing the new identity, but rather acting in prescribed ways only when it was needed.

In this study, each teacher’s choice of strategy was influenced by his/her idealized good art teacher. For example, if the idealized art teacher was someone who had the ability to create an efficiently run classroom they the teacher would design classroom procedures he/she believed would result in an efficiently run classroom. If the teacher found, through an evaluation of practice, that he/she had not achieved an efficiently run classroom, the teacher had to decide what to do next, or how to proceed in order to have an efficiently run classroom. The strategies the teachers in this study employed while doing identity work to become the teacher they wanted to be ranged from how they arranged their teaching practices, to the way they used identity talk to distance or assert a preferred identity (Snow & Anderson, 1972).

*Kat becomes a different person.*

One challenge to Kat’s identity as good art teacher was that she considered herself to be a very shy person.

I was really, really, really painfully shy when I was growing up, and to be a teacher, you can’t really be shy. It was kind of the opposite of my
natural personality, but it just, I wanted to help, and I liked kids, and I loved art…. I have bad habits. I bite my nails and sometimes I pull my hair, or, I have all kinds of nervous tics and things like that. I say things like “um” or here and there, sometimes it pops out that I’m nervous, but I’ve gotten used to it, and I kind of put my mind in a separate mode. Say, “Okay, now I’m in teacher mode. It’s not Kat mode, not my regular self; it’s teacher mode.” Then I go there and it’s okay.

Kat believed that to be the kind of teacher she wanted to be, she needed to be confident and present herself in a certain way in front of her students. She realized, however, that this was a challenge for her. She was able to identify certain actions she did (saying “um,” or biting her fingernails) that indicated she was acting nervously, in a way that didn’t match with her “idealized good art teacher.” Her shy disposition did not allow her to fulfill her good art teacher identity. In order to resolve this problem, Kat selected the strategy of role separation. In role separation the teachers distinguished between different identities, presenting each one in the appropriate context. Kat distinguished between a “teacher mode” and her “regular self.” In this way she could be the type of teacher she thought she should be in the classroom and be her “regular” self in another context.

**Olivia changes her practice.**

Olivia wanted to make her classroom a safe space where her students could feel cared for. While teaching art in a facility for troubled boys, Olivia encountered one particular student with whom she had a hard time connecting. This boy, she told me, had a rough time before ending up at the facility where she
taught. He had attempted suicide a number of times, was of Mexican heritage but ended up belonging to a gang of skin heads, and his father recently died. In her interview Olivia said, “He was so hard to light up. He wouldn’t even look. He wouldn’t smile. He wouldn’t anything. He wouldn’t do anything. He would just sit there and stare at the table.”

Olivia told me that as a teacher in the boys’ institute, she used to go against the school’s policy, and listen to music in her classroom. One day, the troubled boy asked her very quietly:

“Do you ever listen to [the band] AFI?” I was like, “No.” He was like, “Oh,” and it was all that he had ever said to me…. Then I knew that his birthday was coming up and I can’t remember how I figured it out. I knew his birthday was coming up and so I made it my mission, and I didn’t have any AFI. I went over to my junior high student’s house. He gave me his collection of AFI CDs.

Then the next day in class… I go into the class and he’s sitting at his desk. I throw the CD down on his book and I chose the AFI CD that doesn’t have the words AFI on it; it just has a picture so you’d only know what it was if you— If you knew it. He like, he just like starts smiling across his face like first smile I’d ever seen from this little boy. He’d been there a couple months and he was just like, his eyes kinda get wide and he’s just sitting there. I was like, “You can listen to it, but if it sucks only one song.”

He’s just like, the other boys were like, “What’s going on? Why she do that?” He’s like, “Cuz it’s my birthday today.” When I got done teaching I came into the hall. He was walking out of my classroom and he had the biggest smile on his face. He was like, “that was the best thing ever.” From that moment on that little bird he just….

In this case, Olivia found that the challenge to her identity happened because the typical, every day practices she used to reach her students and make them feel
cared for (giving them choices in lessons, getting to know them as they worked on their projects, interacting with them in the classroom, talking to the students’ counselor), did not work with this particular student. This child needed extra attention, he needed something more personalized; she wasn’t being successful with her typical approach. In order to solve her problem, and overcome this challenge to her identity, Olivia used the strategy of *adjustment of practice*.

When the teachers use adjustment of practice as a strategy, they choose to alter or change a teaching practice in some way. Olivia decided to change how she tried to reach the students in order to make a connection with him, in this case borrowing CDs and listening to one for the student’s birthday.

*Miss M distances herself.*

One of the problems Miss M faced while constructing her identity as a good art teacher, was the frustration of working with colleagues who had different goals, standards, and expectations than hers. She found the different expectations challenging at times because students would take her ceramics class after having been in a colleague’s classroom for the prerequisite course. Since, the two teachers had different goals, Miss M ended up with students in her class who were not prepared in the way she needed them to be. These differences were also a problem when Miss M tried to get ideas from another teacher to help her through her first year of teaching. She shared:

There was this older teacher who invited us to her classroom and gave us a bunch of sample lessons for the younger kids. It was like basically
coloring sheets. I was like, man. I don’t wanna do this. I just got a bad feeling. I was like, this isn’t good. The kids can do much more than this, and they should be doing much more than this.

As she interacted with other ceramics teachers in her school and district, she found that their ideas, habits, and teaching styles were challenging her own understanding of what it meant to be a good teacher. In this case Miss M chose to use the strategy of distancing (Snow & Anderson, 1987) to assert her identity. Distancing is an act of removing oneself from those people or identities one does not want to be considered a part of. Woods, Jeffrey, Troman, and Boyle (1997) found that teachers in their study used distancing to separate themselves from undesirable teacher identities. MacLure (1993) referred to this type of action as an oppositional strategy. An oppositional strategy is when individuals make claims to their own identity by creating “categories that exemplify what one is not” (p. 316).

During the interview Miss M engaged in identity talk to distance herself and her practices from the practices of colleagues she felt were not being “good art teachers.” Evidence of this strategy in use in Miss M’s comments can be seen in the following passage.

She was like a veteran teacher. She’s like nationally board certified. I still talk to her, to this day. Very, very nice lady. Sometimes I kinda butted heads with her on certain things. She was one of those art teachers that- and I work with one now- it’s like everything has to be a certain height. Everything has to be a certain color. Everything has to be. Didn’t give the kids a whole lot of freedom. I don’t like that. I would sometimes, and she didn’t, I think she expected low of the kids. How do I wanna say that? She didn’t have high expectations. They’re not gonna be able to do it. They’re gonna mess it up. They’re jerks. I don’t like that either. I kinda
treat my students like they’re adults, basically. I give them respect, and I expect respect back, I guess.

In this passage Miss M distanced herself from practices that didn’t align with her idealized good art teacher by first establishing the practices she found negative; being very particular, not giving the students much freedom, and having low expectations for her students. In the last three sentences, Miss M established her own identity as different from her colleague’s, by describing what she does and what she believes. She does not like the lack of freedom the other teachers allow, and she treats her own students with respect. By building an oppositional identity Miss M is saying, “Here are things that I believe to be negative, but I don’t do those, instead, this is what I do.”

Later in the interview, Miss M distances herself again.

Yeah, and see the other ceramics teacher, that’s how she is. Super intense. She has them come in, and there’s a PowerPoint up for every single day with their objectives. Then she has sub-objectives and like goals. I have that stuff, but it’s written on the board and it stays the same for the whole project…. I’ll give ‘em a daily list of, this is what we’re doing today. She does an exit question every single day, and a closure. She’s like, “You really gotta make sure that you open and close your classroom a certain way.” I don’t know….

I don’t give them an exit question every day. I do if we have extra time and everybody’s just sitting there, staring at the wall. I’ll be like, well, so now here’s a question. Who’s gonna get- and then I’ll give ’em candy.

I think if you beat them to death with all of that super structured, very rigid, I mean, if you’re gonna try to take a ceramics class and turn it into a math class or an English class, they’re gonna get mad at you. That’s not what they’re expecting. You have to just let it go. Let it be an art class. Sure, you’re not gonna run it like a studio ceramics from like college, because they’re high school kids and they need certain things. But give ’em a little bit of that, because that’s what art is about. That’s one of the
cool things about it, I think…. I dunno. Maybe I’m wrong, but that’s how I feel.

Again, Miss M outlined the practices that did not align with her own understanding of what it meant to be a good art teacher: being very strict, giving an exit question each day, using a PowerPoint each day. At the end of the first paragraph, she even questioned the practices by saying, “I don’t know” to indicate she does not necessarily agree with the practices in question. In the next paragraph she established why those teaching practices are ineffective by pointing out the flaws. Finally, Miss M asserted her beliefs, her identity as a good teacher, by explaining what she does and why she does it: she left her objectives on the board for the entire lesson, only used exit questioning periodically so the students wouldn’t get bored, and tried to make her classroom stay true to an art classroom, rather than trying to make it be “something else.”

**Russell plays the game.**

Russell encountered challenges to his identity as a “good art teacher” in the form of external factors. Russell taught ceramics, stained glass, and sculpture in a suburban high school with a high rate of economically disadvantaged students. When I asked him if he considered himself to be a good art teacher, Russell replied:

Actually I am pushing the great teacher…because I see what’s happening in my classroom. I see how the students react when they come in. I see that good things are happening. When you see a good teacher, you see their students that tells the story. They’re accomplishing great things….
Great things happen. They help each other out. When you listen to their conversations it’s appropriate conversations. It’s focused conversations. They’re improving themselves. It’s pleasant, you hear laughter, but you see that things are happening. Good things are happening in the class. That, to me, means that things are going well and if they are meshing with standards. If they’re meshing with the ideas that you went ahead and mapped out, your lesson planning, and I mean that’s how you measure it.

In this passage Russell explained why he believed he was moving towards being a “great” teacher. His evidence came from indicators in his classroom with the students: that they worked as a community, they accomplished great things, and his lessons were working with the standards and his goals for the lessons. The problem that Russell identified, however, came not from his own practice, but from the district’s evaluation. After explaining why he felt he was a good art teacher, Russell stated:

[How you measure] it’s not just a written thing. Oh don’t get me started. Anyways. I mean anyways, that’s how I evaluate whether I’m doing well. And I did have a school administrator come in and say that I am far surpassing, so there you go.

Russell’s comment of, “Oh don’t get me started” and the “so there you go” indicate that Russell is questioning the validity of the evaluation as a way to measure the quality of his practice. Based on his response, I asked him if he ever thinks about the evaluations. He replied:

Oh heavens. I’ve sweated bullets five days before it, you know? Going to the umpteenth degree to make sure that everything was just so. I couldn’t do that every day though, it’s ridiculous. I couldn’t do that every day, but I did it when I needed to…. That’s right. It wasn’t natural and the kids were just like, oh my gosh, they were rolling their eyes like really? Okay we’re gonna do this, and we did some fun activities. Don’t get me wrong, I didn’t, they were engaged. It was a positive experience, but it wasn’t
what we normally do…. Oh we had to have a *PowerPoint*. We had to have it, I mean it was just like when we’re starting a new unit. It had to have all of that. It had to have the question and answer, a small group activity, one on one, how many student responses. They were writing down every little thing. How many people were involved? How many were focused? How many were off task?

In this passage from his interview, Russell shared that he does care about formal evaluations, even though he realizes that in order to score well on them, he has to do things that are different from how he runs his class on a day-to-day basis. In this case, Russell chose to use the strategy of *game playing* (Woods & Jeffrey, 2002) to reconcile the challenge to his good art teacher identity.

Woods and Jeffrey (2002) explain that *playing the game* occurs when teachers act out newly assigned social identities during an inspection situation. They explain that “game playing is a defense. It is not for real, but something that is being enacted outside the really important frame of one’s life where the innermost self resides (p. 102).” Woods, Jeffrey, Troman, and Boyle (1997) speak of this same strategy as *working the system*. They found that teachers in their study worked the system because it helped them manage their “fragile self” (p. 68).

Russell chose to play the game by going along with some of the requirements of the evaluation. Russell altered the way he taught his class in order to obtain a desired rating. However, Russell also knew that what he did to earn a favorable rating was not real when he acknowledged that his practices were not “natural” and didn’t necessarily align with his understanding of what it meant to
be a good art teacher. Shortly after discussing how he played the game, Russell reiterated the fact that these practices were not something he normally did. In this case he told his evaluators about his game playing. He said, “I told em’, I said, ‘This is what happens at the beginning of the unit, but then the kids have to go ahead and implement that, otherwise- I mean that’s what we do here.’”

Russell’s identity as a good art teacher was challenged by the district’s evaluation system. In order to protect his identity, Russell chose to play the game, and alter his practice during his evaluation. While he was willing to put on a performance for his evaluators, he also acknowledged that the things he was doing were not authentic. He knew that in order to earn a favorable rating on the evaluations, he had to engage in practices that did not necessarily fit into his own definition of what it meant to be a good art teacher.

*Roxanne shuts the door.*

Roxanne was adamant about the need to teach her students in a way that was personally meaningful to them. She worked in a school with a high poverty and a high immigrant and refugee population. She shared that many of her students don’t know where their next meal is coming from. This made it a challenge for many of them to put education as their first priority. For Roxanne, it was important that her students personally connected to their artworks so they would be motivated and could take something away from her class. For her, what some students needed to take away from her art class was a start to the “whole
process of becoming an American” rather than specific art skills. In her classroom she designed lessons that would help her students be introspective and think about their identities and beliefs.

Roxanne discussed how she evaluated her own practice through reflection. By thinking about the lessons she taught she could figure out what was working and what was not. She used the analogy of making a collage to describe her reflective process, “Just because I’ve got this thing over here that I really, really like, and I want to put it in the collage, if it doesn’t fit there, don’t use it.” When I asked Roxanne if she considered herself to be a good teacher she said “most of the time.” She went on to explain,

I think that even though I’m far from perfect, the thing that I think makes me a good teacher is that I genuinely care about my kids and their success. You know, they all come in at point A and however far they move, you know, it might not be very far, but my hope is that I can be a part of their life enough to at least nudge them forward a little bit. If they don’t achieve during that period of time that I have them, maybe at least they can see the potential of achieving. It might not happen now, but it might happen sometime in the future, and maybe not even in my subject…. I know enough about the craft, the art of teaching that stuff happens in my classroom, and kids achieve, and win awards, and get good scores on AP exams, and so something must be happening that’s, I’m helping them.

Roxanne encountered challenges to her identity that were not related to her own teaching practices, but instead were related to factors outside her control. Multiple times in her interview, Roxanne discussed the way her notion of a good art teacher (someone who cared for their students in a “human” way) was challenged by the state’s and district’s requirements. At one point, she explained that the state’s graduation exam was just a “gatekeeper,” which removed the meaning
from education. “They [the students] won’t have anything to write about because we’re not addressing their heart and soul,” she said.

At another point, Roxanne pointed out that how she taught conflicted with the things she was evaluated on by her administrators.

[My practice is] completely inside out from how I get evaluated, and how my district wants me to do it. They want me to do all that scaffolding and blah, blah, blah, but for my students, that doesn’t work.

In Roxanne’s case, the challenge to her identity wasn’t coming from a specific action she took, or the results of something she did, but from an outside source. The district’s requirements, in the form of her evaluation, had introduced a new “idealized good art teacher” into the equation. By her own measures, Roxanne believed she was succeeding (most of the time) in being the type of teacher she wanted to be. By the district’s measures, however, she may not have been.

Roxanne dealt with this challenge to her identity by using the strategy of rejection. She rejected the identity the district was attempting to assign to her (by having her comply with the evaluation policy), and asserted her own preferred identity (teaching how she felt was best), the version of her good art teacher self.

Roxanne explained that she would not alter her practices or her beliefs, in order to meet the evaluation requirements.

They want to see think-pair-share, and reciprocal reading, and all this kind of stuff. It’s like when it’s appropriate, when it applies to what I’m doing, I can do that kind of stuff, but when it has nothing to do with what I’m doing, I’m not just gonna stick it in there for a dog and pony show. I’m not gonna do that.
I honor my students too much, and I honor myself too much to do that. It’s like if that means I’m a bad teacher, then I’m a bad teacher according to your rubric.

Roxanne, who’d been a teacher for 29 years, shared:

One of the advantages of being at the end of my career is that I don’t care if I get bad evaluations. It’s like, come on in, score me on your little rubric. If I don’t fit into that mold, I can live with that because I’m doing what I think is right for my kids. I’m teaching these individuals. I’m not teaching for the evaluation.

Roxanne’s rejection of the new identity resulted in her getting poor evaluations.

“I didn’t see any collaboration.” Oh, because everybody was working on their own drawing? Because everybody was doing their own idea development in their own sketchbook? Yeah. I mean they talk to each other about their ideas, I mean what, you know?… Yeah. It’s like you didn’t observe it, and so it never happens.

Despite her poor evaluations, she still asserted her identity when she stated, “Punish me. What’re you gonna do? Fire me? After 20 years of teaching? Really? If education has become that, then I shouldn’t be here. I should find something else.”

For Roxanne, the challenge to her understanding of what it meant to be a good teacher came in the form of the district’s requirements. In this case, the district was attempting to assign a new social identity to Roxanne, by measuring her quality of teaching against their “idealized good teacher.” The district’s measuring stick did not match Roxanne’s own measuring stick. As a result, Roxanne chose to reject this new identity and reassert her preferred identity, despite the possibly negative consequences of poor evaluations. Roxanne chose to
“shut the door and teach,” doing what she believed was right for the students, rather than change her practice to meet an alternative version of what it meant to be a good art teacher.

***TRY AGAIN, PLEASE***

The reactions I got from my adviser confirmed that I was becoming the type of researcher I wanted to be. And so I kept going with my writing style. I am still using it at this moment in fact.

But my friend's comments challenged by identity. The early writing I'd done for this chapter wasn't clear and the lack of clarity didn't make anyone want to read it. Not even me. So I went back to the drawing board. I changed how I wrote. I got rid of the fancy smart-sounding words. When I absolutely needed to use academic terminology, I tried to explain the ideas simply, and illustrate and explain the different theories using examples from my own life. I took a writing style that worked in one chapter to fix the struggles I'd had in another. I chose this strategy to reconcile the effect of my actions on the kind of good researcher I really wanted to be.

Summary.

In the fourth step of my proposed identity construction process, Strategy Selection, the teachers in this study selected ways in which they addressed challenges to their identities. The strategies the teachers used to confirm, assert, or defend their identities as good art teachers, ranged from adjusting their teaching practices to playing a game to meet external measures of quality.
A completed example.

In the process of identity construction I am proposing, the teachers worked towards being the types of art teachers they wanted to be, or their idealized good art teacher. To do so, the teachers chose teaching practices, evaluated those practices, identified the reasons why they were successful in their practices, and then selected strategies with which to confirm or assert their desired identities. In order to clarify my proposed sequential process of identity construction, I present an example from one of the participants.

**Kat constructs her identity.**

Kat’s *idealized good art teacher* meant that she should help her students create high quality artworks. Kat linked the quality of her students’ artworks to their understanding of class content. In order to help her students understand the content and make good artworks, Kat chose *teaching practices* she believed would help her reach this goal. When I asked her about how she came up with her lessons she shared that while in high school she knew she wanted to be an art teacher, so she saved all of her work and the handouts from her art classes to use in her own classroom. She stated:

I remember the projects that I did there. Cuz I kind of knew that I was going to be an art teacher at that point. I saved every single one of my projects, including my handouts, my lessons, everything. My homework sheets, I saved everything in this giant book and folders and boxes at home. I knew one day I could come back to my classroom and I could pull that stuff out and show the kids what I did, and then also I had examples to go from.
One specific lesson she taught was about drawing self portraits in the style of the artist, Chuck Close. This was a lesson Kat herself did as a high school student. She explained how the first time she taught this during her student teaching, it did not go as well as she had planned.

In my student teaching, it did not go as successfully as I was hoping, this is what I did in May, towards the end of the year. We did it with colored pencils, and I have a couple of those examples that I could show you if you want. I said, a lot of kids got it, and then the other half of the class didn’t. It was because facial proportions weren’t explicitly taught to the kids prior. I thought they would have already covered that. I was naïve, young, and I didn’t know. I said, ‘They probably already know all this.’ It was kind of too advanced for them.

In this story, Kat explained how she evaluated her practice, the lesson she taught, by looking for indicators of her quality in the students’ self portraits. She determined that her practice was not successful because the facial proportions in her students’ did not come out correctly. She then identified the problem, or cause, of the students’ failure as her own teaching. She assumed, she says, that they already knew about facial proportions. Thus her evaluation of practice and identification problem revealed that she was not being the kind of art teacher she wanted to be, one who had students that understood techniques and processed. In order to confirm her identity as a good art teacher, Kat explained:

I tweaked [the lesson], I changed it into the painting project, and I went online and I saw some lessons plans on facial proportions and color theory and how to build upon that before you go to the Chuck Close.

In the above passage Kat has selected the strategy of adjusting her practice in order to overcome the challenge to her identity caused by her assumptions
about her students’ prior knowledge. Kat says that she “tweaked” her lesson by finding online resources to help her learn how to teach facial proportions more successfully.

Figure 6 is an adjusted visual model of my proposed identity construction process. In this version of the model I have included Kat’s specific actions with each sequential step to illustrate the process.
1. Teaching Practice:
   Choses to teach a lesson plan she knew was successful when she was a high school student.

2. Evaluation of Practice:
   Examines student artwork from this lesson: disproportioned faces indicate her students did not know their techniques, media, and process.

3. Problem Identification:
   Determined that she was ineffective due to her assumption that the students had prior knowledge.

4. Strategy Selection:
   She chooses to adjust her practice in order to help her students learn the technique, media, and processes.

Idealized Good Art Teacher:
A good art teacher has students who understand techniques, media and processes.

Figure 6. Sequential model of proposed identity construction process. The model includes one participant’s actions to illustrate each step.
An ongoing cycle.

While Kat’s experiences teaching the Chuck Close lesson as a student teacher indicate the sequential nature of my proposed process of identity construction, the process is also cyclical. Kat’s experience with teaching her lesson about Chuck Close did not end with her adjustment of the lesson (locating practice/worksheets on facial proportions). When Kat got a job teaching junior high after completing her student teaching, she decided to give the lesson another try. Based on her previous experience with the lesson, Kat implemented her changes (starting back at the step of “teaching practices” and including specific teaching about facial proportions with her students) and evaluated her work (looking at the artworks from her new students to determine whether her changes had been effective) and determined the problem (why she had that outcome). In her discussion she concluded:

Now that I’ve been a couple more years teaching, I said, ‘Okay, I really like that”, some of them turned out really awesome in junior high.

Her adjustment of practice strategy resulted in more successful student works when she taught her adjusted lesson. Her success confirmed her identity as a good teacher. Due to her success, Kat chose to teach this same lesson plan in subsequent teaching experiences.

When she got a job teaching art at a high school, Kat figured, based on the positive results she’d had at the junior high, “…my high school students could do better,” on the Chuck Close lesson. Her idealized good art teacher had stayed the
same (students understand techniques, media, and process), so she implemented her previously successful Chuck Close lesson in her new context with her new high school students. She explained:

Yeah. We worked for about a month on a very, very intricate color wheel, and we also worked on tons of prep drawing with facial features. I taught them to measure the head, measure the nose, measure the eyes, and we did worksheets of just eyes. Worksheets of just nose. Worksheets of just the mouths, and then we played with heads. We tilted them and we changed them. Then we practiced from pictures, then we practiced from looking in a mirror, and then we graduated to looking at each other and drawing from there. We did, we talked about contour lines and fast contour drawing, gesture contour drawings and working with all that stuff. Finally, after doing all those little exercises and mini-projects in between, I introduced the Chuck Close….

I showed them little clips of him, and then we went over, we read about his life and I used the Scholastic Art Magazine to help motivate them. Then we jumped into the project, so my results were much more successful this time around than they were last time. It’s still not to where I get every single kid to do the project exactly the way, the results that I want. But I’m getting better results. So I will probably try this lesson again, and then I think I’m gonna focus this next time around on painting techniques. Cuz I think that’s where some kids lost it. Cuz they had all that drawing and all the proportion. They had all that great, and then we jumped into painting. Cuz we understood how to make all the different colors, but then how to paint, specifically, certain things. That’s where I lost some of them.

In this last section, Kat presents us with the cyclical process of “becoming a good art teacher.” Even though her lesson was successful in one context (junior high school), the introduction of a new group of students (high school students) caused her to re-evaluate her own practices. Her lesson plan became a renewed challenge to her identity. This time, while her preparation and pedagogical choices led her students to a successful understanding of facial proportions, her lack of teaching
about painting resulted in her students not being successful with the finished product. Even here, Kat indicated that she is already starting the process again, by thinking about how she can, once again, adjust her practice and work towards becoming her idealized good art teacher.

Figure 7 is an adjusted visual model demonstrating the cyclical nature of my proposed identity construction process. In this version of the model I have included Kat’s specific actions during each cycle to illustrate the process.
**Figure 7.** Cyclical model of proposed identity construction process. The model includes one participant’s actions to illustrate the continual process of identity construction.
My process also isn’t done. Even when I finish this study it will continue. What will the rest of my committee think? What about my mother? Will anyone else ever read this study? Will any teachers ever see the results of this study? Will they think it makes sense? Will they see my passion? Do they relate? Do you? What if I publish an article from these findings? What worked here, may not work again. Could I use my same approaches in future studies? Would the narrator voice work as well? And what if I present these findings at a workshop? And so on and so on….

Challenges to the identity construction process.

I found that each participant in this study engaged in the four steps of the identity construction process I have proposed. Every teacher in this study, in some way, in some context, chose teaching practices that aligned with their idealized good art teacher. Every participant evaluated those practices against what they believed it meant to be a good art teacher. Each one identified challenges or confirmations of his/her identity as a good art teacher. Finally, each teacher selected strategies to address the gap between his/her desired identity as a good art teacher and the challenges to that identity. However, in some situations some of the participants struggled to work through the steps to become their desired identities.

For example, Christopher mentioned numerous times in his interview that he used to have students in his classes who were engaged; they came in after class and on the weekends, and made wonderful artwork. These same students also won awards at art shows and sold their artworks for a profit. He talked about these
experiences as part of his concept of what it meant to be a good art teacher. He spoke of these students and his time with them fondly, explaining that these were positive experiences he’d had. These experiences were contrasted with comments he made throughout the interview including:

I’ve seen less and less of that throughout the years, where they’re less [inclined] to spend more time around us. It involves a lot of effort on your time. They’ve gotta find rides home and da, da, da.

Right now I don’t have enough kids that are dedicated enough to do that like I said.

I don’t know what’s changed in education academically.

That’s why I don’t understand kids today either. The things they complain about being hard. They complain about jewelry being hard.

In relation to my proposed process of identity construction, Christopher could recall a time when he was successful in meeting his goals; his students were engaged and cared about what they were doing in his class. He talked about putting in extra time to support their efforts, and as a result they produced amazing work which won awards. His comments about his current students indicate that he is, on some level, no longer achieving the same thing with this previous group of students. In his interview Christopher did not discuss or identify any causes for this situation or any strategies he used to remedy the challenges to his identity as a good art teacher.

It is possible that this lack of explanation came from my questioning. I did not start this research study looking for a process of identity construction; the idea
of identity construction and the four step process I am proposing, did not emerge until I had completed the interviews and coded the data. It is possible that I did not ask the right kind of questions to elicit a response to this situation. However, because I asked, more or less, the same questions to each interviewee, and in most instances the participants shared how they overcame challenges to their identities through the use of strategies, it is reasonable to suggest that perhaps Christopher did not know how to identify the challenge to his identity in this situation, or did not have a strategy to effectively work towards changing the situation. This does not indicate that Christopher is not a good teacher. It may indicate that in this one context he is still working on re-defining exactly what being a good art teacher means to him and figuring out how to become that identity.

**Summary**

The question I was trying to answer in this study was, “How do high school art teachers conceptualize being a good art teacher.” After conducting interviews and classroom observations I found that for the teachers in this study, being a good art teacher was a process of constructing their teacher identities. The teachers each painted portraits of their idealized good art teacher selves through the stories they told of previous experiences as students and teachers. Their idealized self served as a measuring stick against which they chose and implemented teaching practices, evaluated those practices, identified problems, and selected strategies to maintain, manage, or adjust their identities. The process
they engaged in was a cyclical one in which the teachers are continually engaged as they construct their identities as “good art teachers.”
Good is an odd word. What it means to be “good” can change depending on the context, speaker, and audience. What remains the same is that despite its changing meaning, “good” is always a measure of quality. This is true when describing the quality of a not-so-good book or the most amazing meal ever eaten. The same is also true in discussions of teaching and learning, in the discourse surrounding education, and in the labeling of the quality of teachers. What is good in one context, for one student, interacting with one teacher may not be good for all students, in all contexts, for all teachers. Yet many of those currently discussing quality in education are attempting to define what it means to “be a good teacher” in very narrowed and limiting ways.

The current public, political, and for-profit definitions of good teaching limit the way a teacher can be “good.” In this discussion, teachers have become a “present absence” (Ball, 1993): they are at the center of the conversation yet their voices, stories, and understandings are suspiciously missing. As Rolling (2010) suggests, the missing voices of teachers may cause them to be trapped in a paradigm that does not fit them at all. Nowhere is this truer than in the often vulnerable subject of the visual arts, where misinformed perceptions can resulted in cuts to programs and limited access to art education for students. The purpose of this study was to add the voices of teachers to the discussion of quality in art
education. I began this study to answer the question, “How do high school art
teachers conceptualize being a good art teacher?”

Through interviews, classroom observations, an autoethnographic self-
reflection, I found that for these participants, in their contexts, in this study,
“being a good art teacher” was a process of becoming the type of teacher they
wanted to be. I have proposed a process of identity construction in which art
teachers’ “idealized teacher selves” served as a measuring stick against which
they made pedagogical decisions, evaluated their practices, identified the causes
of their successes or failures, and selected strategies with which to reconcile the
difference between their desired identities and the results of their choices. Figure
8 is a visual model of my proposed process of identity construction.

My proposed identity construction process supports theory that describes
identity as influenced by personal and social aspects. The teachers in this study
developed their “idealized good art teacher” and evaluated their practices
internally (what did it mean to them to be a good art teacher?) and socially (how
did others react to or evaluate their practices?). My proposed model also supports
the idea that identity is actively constructed. All of the teachers in this study made
choices to support the construction of their desired identities. They chose specific
lessons to teach, they interacted with students in selected ways, and they talked
about themselves as art teachers using certain strategies to either confirm their
identities or distance themselves from unwanted ones.
My findings indicate that identity is both situational and substantive. The idealized good art teacher that the participants described was substantive, having been formed over their lifetimes and linked to their experiences as students, people, and teachers. Yet their identities were also situational, changing with context: some teachers found that what made them successful in one school no longer worked in a different one, that their approaches to engaging students worked for most students, but not all students. Finally, my findings support the idea that each person has multiple identities. The art teachers I worked with...
identified themselves as artists, mothers, daughters, fathers, students, and teachers. Each of these identities informed the others; the art teachers’ struggles with personal issues, their triumphs as artists, and their desire to continue learning, informed and were informed by their identities as “good art teachers.”

***IT WORKS FOR ME***

Ideas about identity also work within my own autoethnographic reflection, within my own process of constructing my identity as a good researcher and PhD student.

What I understand a good researcher and a good PhD student to be is very personal. My self-reflection throughout this research process revealed that my ideas are strongly connected to my own experiences as a student, a teacher, and with other researchers and academics. But I am also influenced by the way others perceive me and react to the identity I present. Even as I sit and write these words I wonder what my committee, future researchers who access my writing, and my classmates and friends will think. What will I think ten years from now?

I have also actively worked to construct the identity I want. I chose to use certain research methods. I have written this paper in a very deliberate way, and have added an art making component to my work. All this in an attempt to become a good researcher, a great PhD student. At least as I understand it.

My idealized self, the good researcher and student I want to be, has been formed since I wrote my first research paper in the 5th grade, drawing little images of the skeletal system throughout my pages—maybe ever since I discovered the set of encyclopedias on the bookshelf across from my bedroom and discovered how many awesome things were inside. My research questions came directly from my experiences as a high school art teacher. Yet how I present myself changes with my context. I speak, act, and dress differently when I am with my peers after class than I do when I am presenting my research at an academic conference or sharing my work with my advisers, and still different when I talk to my mom about my research. Each of these situational selves ultimately influences my substantive self. Each reaction I receive, each success and failure has the potential to change what it means to me to be a good researcher, a good PhD student.
Finally, while I identify most with being a researcher and a PhD student as I write this dissertation, I cannot help also accessing my art teacher self, my artist self, and probably many other selves I don't even know I have.

While each of the teachers in this study engaged in a similar process while constructing their “good art teacher” identities, each teacher’s conception of exactly what made him/her a “good art teacher” was unique. For one teacher being a good art teacher meant she was in-tune with her students’ struggles with poverty, for another it meant teaching his students to engage thoughtfully and skillfully in the art making process. The source of the teachers’ understandings of what it meant to be a good art teacher and the choices they made to actively construct those identities, came from personal and individual experiences, beliefs, and goals. Thus, the process of “being a good art teacher” is very personal, internal, and introspective.

The more narrowed definitions of “being a good teacher” in the public, political, and for-profit discussion of quality in education seem to ignore, disregard, or overlook, the personal aspects of identity construction. These narrowed definitions actually became an added challenge to teachers’ understandings of their identities. Along with challenges to their identities from their own choices, struggles with students, community, administration, and challenges of their subject area, the teachers frequently cited external measurements such as evaluation systems or district level teacher requirements, as additional obstacles. My findings are supported by the work of other researchers
who also found that external measurements could have a profound impact on
teacher identity (Woods, Jeffrey, Troman, Boyle, 1997; Ball, 1993; Troman &
stick challenged their internal measuring stick, the teachers often struggled to
reconcile the differences.

I found that that high school art teachers in this study conceived of being a
good art teacher as a process of becoming the type of art teachers they wanted to
be. Each day in their classrooms, the teachers actively constructed their desired
identities by choosing teaching practices, evaluating those practices, identifying
problems, and selecting strategies with which to continue becoming their
idealized good art teacher. Throughout the process of identity construction the
teachers measured and evaluated their choices and actions against their
understanding of what being a good art teacher meant to them. Each art teacher’s
understanding of what made him/her a good art teacher was unique and related to
his/her past experiences as a student, teacher, and individual. These findings lead
to many implications for teachers, teacher educators, and administrators and
policy makers. My findings have also lead to implications for further study. In the
following sections I discuss those implications.

Implications for Teachers

One implication of this study is the need for teachers to become reflective
practitioners who purposefully consider their practices and the role identity plays
in those practices. Hansen (1995) states that it isn’t the role of “teacher” that teaches the students, but the “person within that role and who shapes it who teaches students, and who has an impact on them for better or for worse” (p. 17).

Chetcuti (1992) explains that the more teachers understand themselves and can articulate reasons why they do what they do and are what they are, the more meaningful their experiences will be. She suggests that reflective teaching allows teachers to be thoughtful about their practice and make sense of themselves and their decisions. Palmer (1998) suggests the need to reflect upon one’s own teaching practice and the need to actively try to understand one’s “teacher self-identity.” In his work, The Courage to Teach, Palmer explains that “good teaching” comes from within and that one of the most practical things a person can do in this quest is to look for insight into what is happening within one’s self as one teaches.

***MY OWN QUEST***

For me, this study, this process of writing a dissertation, or becoming an academic, has been part of my own quest to look for insight into my inner self. Reflecting personally on the research findings has proven invaluable for me. While I am not sure whether I have been successful yet at being who I want to be, thinking about what that means is taking me a bit closer.

How, though, might one reflect on practice? Palmer (1998) suggests thinking about the mentors one has had throughout life. He explains that by mentor he does not necessarily mean a teacher, but someone who impacted one’s life by “awaking a truth within us” (p. 21). Palmer also suggests reflecting on “the
subject that chose us” (p. 25). Palmer suggests teachers consider what it was about the subject area they chose to teach that gave them a sense of self. What drew them to the arts? What part of their self did the subject help them understand or come to terms with? Finally, Palmer suggests that by thinking about “the teacher within,” the very personal core version of self, teachers can gain authenticity in their teaching, begin to feel at home in their teaching, and reach students in a way they cannot do otherwise.

Chetcuti (1992) reviews literature and outlines a number of strategies for becoming a reflective practitioner. She describes different types of reflective thinking including cognitive thinking, which focuses on content and pedagogical knowledge and decisions, critical thinking, which focuses on moral, ethical, and social justice aspects, and narrative thinking, which focuses on the teacher’s voice. For Chetcuti, reflection does not just spontaneously occur, but is an active and deliberate process in which a teacher engages. She suggests that teachers use a tool box of approaches for self reflection including journaling, writing one’s own biography, picturing one’s contexts, analyzing documents from one’s classrooms. Chetcuti’s also suggests “reflection is not necessarily something which takes place in isolation” (p. 246). She suggests using storytelling, dialoguing with other professionals, interviewing colleagues, and engaging in participant observation to engage in reflective practice with others.

Within this study, each teacher’s idealized self was at the core of his/her identity construction process. This idealized self was a version of who each
teacher wanted to be and the type of art teachers each worked to become. Actively working to understand and acknowledge that aspect of self may benefit the teacher’s process of identity construction by bringing his/her understandings and the implications of those understandings to the forefront. In fact, a few of the participants in this study openly acknowledged the usefulness of participating in this study as a way to reflect on their selves and their practices. One question I asked each participant in the interview was if/how they reflected on their practice. Sal replied,

The reason I want you to come into my class and observe me is because I need the push. Yeah. Like, All right. I’m gonna have to make sure that I really do expect quality and that my kids can really get quality. That’s what’s good about havin’ a student teacher. We have a new lady in our department who- she’s really good and she’s pretty- I mean she like pounds the kids, but there’s things for me to learn from that.

Sal’s comments indicate that by thinking about quality during the interview, and my presence in his classroom made him reflect on his own practice. Sal also suggested that the presence of a student teacher in his classroom was a useful tool for self reflection.

Miss M and Roxanne also indicated to me, informally, that they felt the process was helpful for them. Miss M sent me an email a few days after the interview saying she had an experience in her classroom directly related to our conversation, and that she would not have thought about the issue without participating in the this study. Roxanne stated that in the time between our interview and my classroom observations in her art room, she spent a good
amount of time thinking about whether or not she was actually doing what she wanted to do as a teacher.

One implication of this study is for teachers to become reflective practitioners. Actively thinking about one’s self as a teacher and what this means can lead to a greater understanding of one’s own reasoning and decision making. Actively thinking about the influences in our lives, such as mentors and subject matter, through journaling, analyzing documents, or interacting with peers, are all ways to begin engaging in reflective teaching.

**Implications for Teacher Educators**

Along with the need for teachers to become reflective practitioners, the findings in this study also have implications for teacher educators. The findings suggest that becoming a good art teacher is a very personal experience that requires more than a collection of technical skills and abilities. My findings indicate that being a good teacher is a process that occurs cyclically and continually over the course of a person’s teaching experiences. In order to foster teachers’ understandings of their teacher selves and the role these personal beliefs, attitudes, histories, and decisions have on teaching practices, teacher educators need to begin including courses and course content connecting pedagogical decisions to teacher identity.

By addressing this critical component of teaching, teacher educators can begin to assist teachers in becoming reflective practitioners and gaining an
awareness of the impact of personal beliefs and attitudes on their development as teachers. One way to do this may be to provide preservice teachers with strategies for reflection. Including works by authors such as Palmer and Chetcuti, or readings about the emerging practice of mindfulness (Napoli, 2004) in required or suggested reading lists may be helpful.

Simply integrating readings into class content may not be enough, however. Teacher educators also need to provide preservice teachers with opportunities to engage in personal reflection and explore their identities. Based on the positive comments I received from my participants, as well as my own experiences with this research study, I designed a pair of self-reflective worksheets that I believe could be implemented in a variety of teacher education courses to help teachers identify their “idealized teacher self” and become cognizant of their experiences with my proposed identity construction process. In this set of worksheets I adjusted the visual model of my proposed identity construction process to a fill-in-the blank form. I also created a list of self reflective questions, related to both the identity construction process based on the questions I asked in the interviews, to help stimulate and guide preservice teachers’ thinking about identity. These questions include, “What kind of art teacher do I want to be?”, “How do I know if I am meeting my goals as a teacher?”, and “When I find that I haven’t met my goals, what do I do? Why?” I suggest using these two worksheets to help students explore and reflect on their
ideas about what being a good art teacher means to them, and how they can achieve their desired identities. Appendix F contains these two documents.

***IMPLICATIONS FOR ALL***

Perhaps there are implications for others as well. I personally found that thinking about the way I construct my identity was helpful and refreshing. Verbalizing my goals and looking at what I was doing to achieve them actually made them easier to see. Reflecting made it easier for me to explain my choices, to defend them, and to share them with others. I also feel that being reflective allowed me to deal with and overcome challenges to my identity. When friends didn't seem to understand what I was talking about, when I couldn't format my dissertation the way I really thought it should be, when my adviser found oh so many grammatical mistakes, when my manuscript got rejected from a journal, I was able to think about WHY these things were challenges to me and make cognitive decisions about how to work with and around them.

Perhaps if, in all levels and fields of study, we focused more on identity, on understanding who we want to be, and how to reconcile the challenges we face in our identity construction process, we could all begin to, as Palmer suggests, understand our inner selves, and have the courage to teach, to be, and encourage those we encounter to do the same.

Artmaking and talking about artworks may also be an excellent entry point for teaching and learning about identity. Mason and Vella (2013) discuss using contemporary art as a starting point for discussions about identity. They suggest using works such as Anthony Gormley’s Field installations of a multitude of anonymous figures, or Gillian Wearing’s photographs of anonymous people holding up signs with confessions written on them, to discuss personal identity and self-awareness. Mason and Vella discuss using artworks to explore social identity, physical appearance, and ethnic, political, and gender differences and
stereotypes. Pellish (2012) used art as a foundation for her elementary school students to explore their own identities. She used a timeline of art history as a starting point for her students to make timelines of their lives. The timelines the students made included images reflecting their identities, such as where they came from, who they were, and their goals for the future. While this lesson was done with elementary students, it could successfully be adapted to work with students of any level.

Jungerborg, Smith, and Borsh (2012) shared a lesson in which students learned about Syrian born artist Diana Al-Hadid as a starting point for creating their own artworks exploring the connection between history, circumstance, and cultural identity. Song (2009) discussed a workshop she lead with a group of second generation Korean-American high school students. In the three week workshop the students explored important identity questions such as, “Who am I?” The workshop culminated with the students creating sculptures and books expressing their understandings of identity, heritage, and culture. Each of these examples supports the way the arts can be a catalyst for exploring identity.

***A REFLECTION IN THREAD***

Each stitch, each push of the needle, each slow stretch of the thread through the fabric, was a reflection. As I created the artwork that accompanies this dissertation, I was engaged in reflective practice. As I worked towards making sense of the data, I was also working towards understanding myself. What motivated the teachers to make their choices? And what motivated me to make mine? Why did I feel I needed to add this component to my research? Why did I make this extra work? What was I hoping to achieve?
My answer is deceptively simple.

Of course I needed to do this. It is a part of me. It is helping me become the kind of me I want to be.

A second implication for teacher educators comes from the challenges some of the participants faced with the identity construction process. The process of identity construction I found in this study was not always easy for my participants. I found that the teachers expressed frustration when they were unable to reconcile the differences between being the kind of teacher they wanted to be and the challenges they encountered to those identities. During her interview, Mrs. Reed appeared particularly frustrated with her inability to continue being the “good art teacher” she believed she had been in her previous teaching job. Olivia also expressed some regret about the fact that her personal life had gotten in the way of her achieving her goals in the classroom.

One possible reason for this frustration may have come from the teachers’ lack of ability to identify the causes of the challenges to their identity and the strategies with which they chose to address those challenges. For example, when Olivia found that her personal life was getting in the way of her ability to be the kind of teacher she wanted to be, she indicated that she was not sure how to overcome that challenge. She spoke of “re-emerging” in the next few years, but she did not express any concrete steps she was taking to do so. This vagueness in her responses may indicate a lack of strategies to do so. Miss Reed had similar struggles. While she was able to identify many reasons she might be struggling,
including not fitting in her new context, student work-ethic, and health issues in her own life, she appeared unsure how to begin to overcome these challenges.

While many teacher education programs prepare future teachers extensively for making sound pedagogical decisions, to understand theories of child development and psychology, and with content knowledge, few include strategies to address the teacher-self or the challenges that come with trying to achieve that identity. Therefore, teacher educators may need to explicitly teach strategies for making sense of identity construction. Many teacher education programs provide teachers with a tool box of strategies to use when working with students with disabilities or to appropriately teach content matter to diverse learners. Perhaps teaching strategies for managing identity in courses about developing a teacher self, or alongside other methodologies, can provide teachers with a wider range of ways to overcome challenges to identity.

Some implications for teacher educators have emerged from this study. If teachers need to become reflective practitioners, then teacher educators need to help facilitate this practice. Teacher educators should begin to teach courses focusing on identity work and/or include readings on the subject. Teach educators and education programs also need to provide students with opportunities to engage in reflection on identity. These opportunities can be facilitated through my proposed worksheets or by taking advantage of the visual arts and art making.
Implications for Administrators and Policy Makers

Teachers and teacher educators are not alone in the pursuit of quality education. Their practices, strategies, and ideas are often influenced and guided by policy at the school, district, state, and national levels. Therefore, my findings also have implications for the administrators and policy makers who create and implement policy and policy changes. One of the major struggles for many of the teachers in this study was reconciling the differences between how they understood what it meant to be a “good art teacher” and the way “being good” was defined by school, district, and state policies. The teachers found it challenging to meet both their own goals and those being imposed by entities outside their classrooms. The art teachers in this study struggled to balance the requirements of their subject with the “best practices” evaluators looked for. Randy, Miss M, and Roxanne all commented on the fact that they had to change their typical teaching practices on the days they were being evaluated and teach in ways that were not typical or appropriate for their art classrooms in order to receive high scores on their evaluations. Each of them referred to this practice as “the dog and pony show” and each struggled with how to reconcile the difference between what they believed needed to be done in their classrooms and the outside requirements.

My finding, that the teachers’ struggled with outside definitions of what it means to be a good teacher are similar to those found by other researchers. Woods, et al., (1997) and Nias (1989) found that primary school teachers in their
studies also struggled to reconcile the difference between how they understood the role of teacher and what they were able to do/achieve in their teaching context. In their studies they found that when the teachers were unable to reconcile the differences between the internal and external definitions of the role of teacher, some chose to leave the profession of teaching. I do not know how the frustrations expressed by the teachers in this study will affect their longevity in the profession. However, at least one teacher, Miss M, hinted at the possibility of leaving when she stated, “It’s, right now the payoffs are, they far outweigh the drawbacks. So far. Will I feel like that in five years? I dunno. Or ten?”

Teacher retention is an issue facing education today and may be impacted by teacher identity. Ingersoll (2002) states that after just five years in the classroom, over 39% of teachers have left teaching all together. He suggests that one of the main challenges to teacher retention is teacher dissatisfaction and teachers leaving for other jobs. Perrachione, Peterson, and Rosser (2008) also suggest that job satisfaction is one of three factors influencing teachers’ decisions to leave the teaching profession. Graven (2005) found that identity formation can positively impact a teacher’s desire to stay in the profession.

An implication of this study for administrators and policy makers is the need to consider the personal aspects of teaching. Administrators and policy makers need to work with teachers when developing evaluative tools and making policy changes. Talking with teachers about the realities of their classrooms and their understandings of quality may create more buy-in from teachers about policy
and change, and may result in higher levels of job satisfaction. Taking into account teachers’ understandings may also inform the creation of effective policies and approaches to policy change, than those only informed by people outside of the classroom.

Administrators and policy makers also need to carefully consider the unique nature of different subject areas when developing evaluation tools. Some of the teachers in this study admitted to changing their classroom practices for the sole purpose of earning higher evaluation scores (or in one case, not altering practice and accepting the lower score). If art teachers outside this study, and possibly even teachers in other subjects, are altering their practices in superficial ways to earn high scores on evaluations, then the validity of those measurement tools may be questionable. However, if the evaluation tools, administrators, and evaluators, took into account the different approaches to learning and knowing in different subject areas (Eisner, 1991), perhaps teachers would not feel the need to put on a “dog and pony show” and a more accurate evaluation of teaching practices could be accomplished.

The findings in this study suggest that being a good teacher is a process of identity construction heavily influenced by personal beliefs and understandings. These findings suggest the need for teachers to become reflective practitioners, and actively engage in understanding their most inner self. Teacher educators also need to begin preparing preservice teachers to engage in this type of practice by integrating self-reflection and identity strategies into curriculum. Lastly,
administrators and policy makers should begin to consider the personal ways that teachers construct their identities and use the teachers’ voices and understandings when developing and implementing policies such as evaluations.

**Implications for Researchers**

Along with implications for teachers, teacher educators, and administrators and policy makers, this study also has implications for researchers. While working to answer the question, “How do high school art teachers conceptualize being a good art teacher?” many other questions and issues emerged. These issues for further study include the importance of strategies in the identity construction process, the role of dispositions in effective teaching, the development of the “idealized good art teacher” over time, and the effects of performativity on teacher identity.

**The importance of strategies.**

The first implication for further research deals with the use of strategies in the process of identity construction. In this study I found that after the teachers evaluated their practices and identified the causes of their perceived successes or failures, the teachers employed strategies such as adjustment of practice, or distancing to reconcile the differences between their desired identity and the effects of their choices. While I located some strategies the teachers used, my findings do not represent a comprehensive list of available strategies. When I
began this study, I did not know what I would find, so the questions I asked and the data I collected did not specifically focus on the use of strategies in the identity construction process. Examining the strategies art educators employ to confirm, assert, or achieve their desired identities might yield valuable new knowledge.

A second implication for further research related to the use of strategies in identity construction concerns the effects of strategies on teachers and students. For example, do a teacher’s choices to adjust their teaching practices have a more positive or negative effect on student learning than a teacher’s choices to distance themselves from the unwanted identity? Do certain strategies make students motivated in classrooms or feel detached from their learning? Which strategies are more useful at helping teachers maintain job satisfaction? Can a strategy have a positive impact on a teacher and a negative one on the students? The additional exploration of strategies also has implications for teacher educators. If some strategies have more positive effects for students or teachers than other strategies, teacher educators may need to consider which strategies to teach to preservice teachers. It is also necessary to examine what effect explicitly teaching strategies for identity construction to preservice teachers has on their development as teachers and their ability to reconcile the differences between the type of teacher they wish to be and the challenges and realities of their teaching situations.
Dispositions and the “good art teacher.”

Along with implications regarding the use of strategies in the process of identify construction, I found the need to further explore the teachers’ descriptions of “a good art teacher.” As I coded interview transcripts for passages that described what it meant to “be a good art teacher,” I was left with a large list of codes that described beliefs, attitudes, and actions a good art teacher would have. As categories emerged from coding, I found that the teachers’ comments indicated that it was not enough for a teacher to simply have a set of characteristics, such as being caring, passionate, or organized. Instead, the participants’ comments indicated that they believe a good art teacher actively demonstrates these qualities. For example, a teacher couldn’t just believe that all students could achieve in the art classroom, a good teacher also needed to make choices to help all students achieve. This combination of a belief or attitude coupled with an action to demonstrate that belief or attitude was at the heart of the teachers’ descriptions of what they believed a good art teacher would be.

This combination of belief and action is a disposition. Villegas (2007) defines dispositions as “tendencies for individuals to act in a particular manner under particular circumstances, based on their beliefs (p. 373).” These beliefs, she suggests, are often informed by a teacher’s past school and life experiences, and end up shaping how and what a teacher teaches in his/her classroom. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, NCATE (2010-2014), defines dispositions as, “professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated
through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities.” Both of these definitions suggest that dispositions are not just having a specific belief or attitude, but also having the tendency to act in certain ways to demonstrate those beliefs or attitudes.

Diez and Murrell (2010) emphasize the importance of dispositions when they suggest that dispositions play an important role in teacher success. They suggest:

A teacher may have a strong desire to make a difference with learners, but lack the knowledge and skills to carry it off. That is, she may be disposed to a particular level or quality of practice without necessarily having the capacity to enact it. Likewise, a teacher may have knowledge and skill needed to work effectively with young learners, but lack the commitment, persistence, and creativity to overcome external challenges (p. 9).

Diez and Murrell contend that it is the combination of skill and belief that allow for the “enactment of good teaching” (p. 10). I found that there is a large body of literature discussing and defining the meaning of dispositions for teachers (Katz & Raths, 1985; Hoadley & Ensor, 2009; Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007), exploring the role and effects of dispositions in teaching and learning (Caroll, 2007; Thornton, 2006; Helm, 2007, 2006; Wadlington & Waldington, 2011, Giovannelli, 2003; Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010), how to assess dispositions (Sing & Stoloff, 2008; Deiz, 2007; Welch, Pitts, Tenini, Kuenlen, & Woods, 2010), and teachers’ perceptions of teacher dispositions (Varol, 2011).

she used with preservice teachers to help them explore their dispositions. Klein (2008) suggests that the tools used to evaluate dispositions may be ineffective, because they often focus on the outward behaviors of preservice art teachers, rather than get to the core of the preservice teachers’ beliefs. She asserts that if teacher educators want to produce quality art educators they will need to pay attention to the dispositions that reflect an art teachers’ inner life, not just technical skills.

What is missing from art education literature is an exploration of which dispositions may be useful for art teachers. Are these the same dispositions desired for teaching in general or are there certain dispositions that might be more effective for the requirements of the art classroom? What dispositions do artists, art historians, others in the art world, and art teachers share? Can dispositions for effective art making, art understanding, and art teaching be taught to teacher candidates? What are the effects of different art teacher dispositions on student learning?

The idealized good art teacher over time.

Another implication for further study that emerged from this study comes from identity theory. Identity theorists suggest that identity is both situational (changes with context) and substantive (more stable and developed over a life time). While the situational self may change many times each day depending on context, the substantive self evolves more slowly, changing over one’s life time.
In this study, I was able to see that the teachers’ situational selves changed frequently. This was evidenced by their explanations of their practices in different classroom situations. However, due to the relatively short time frame of data collection for the study, which included one 60 to 120 minute interview, and two to three days of classroom observations, I was not able to explore whether/how the teachers substantive self, or “idealized good art teacher” changed over time. While some stories the teachers shared were about their past experiences as teachers and students, it was outside the scope of this study to explore the way the “idealized self” changed.

One implication for further study would be to conduct a longitudinal study of a similar nature to explore the way the teachers’ conceptions of what it means to be a good teacher changed over a longer period of time. I propose that studying art teachers from their entry into a teacher education program, through retirement would be an interesting and exciting way to examine the way events and experiences influence changes in a teacher’s substantive “a good art teacher.”

The performative utterance.

The final implication of this study is related to the struggles the teachers in this study had balancing their own understandings of what it meant to be a “good art teacher” and the external definitions of “good teaching” they encountered during evaluations and formal judgments of their teaching practices. Their
expressed frustration over the disparities in these two “measuring sticks” needs further exploration.

One theory that might prove useful for studying the interaction between external and internal measurement of quality is Austin’s (1962) theory of performative speech acts. Austin (1962) explains that an utterance, or sentence, can perform an action when the statement does not describe or report on what is being done, but is rather an act of “doing.” He uses the example of saying “I do” in a wedding ceremony to illustrate his point (p. 5). In the case of the wedding, the utterance, “I now pronounce you husband a wife” changes the people involved from unmarried individuals to “husbands” or “wives”. However, in order for the performative sentence to actually “do” an action, there must be an existing “conventional procedure” (p. 14), the words must be uttered in an appropriate context, by an appropriate person, and executed by both parties correctly and completely. For example, in the case of being married, two non-married individuals of legal age may be married in an established ceremony, proceeded over by a legitimate officiate. Only when the phrase, “I now pronounce you husband and wife,” is spoken in this context does it perform the action of “marrying.” If a random individual on the street pronounces two strangers “husband and wife,” the utterance has not done anything.

Can Austin’s theory be applied to teacher evaluations? Does the act of an administrator or evaluator ranking a teacher as “highly effective” or “developing” on a formal evaluation have the power to change a teacher’s identity? What
happens to teachers, for example, when they are labeled as either good or bad in an evaluation? What if that label differs from their own perceptions about their quality? Are the effects of this labeling enhanced if the results of the evaluation are made public, such as in a local newspaper or on a school’s website? What effects do the high stakes consequences of being labeled, such as receiving a pay increase or losing a job, have on the strategies teachers use to negotiate their identities? This is one area in need of further study.

***BECOMING DR. A***

What will being labeled “Dr” do for my identity?

Final Thoughts

When I began this study I could not have imagined how it would turn out. I set out with a goal in mind: add an important voice to the discussion surrounding quality in education by listening to the stories of practicing art teachers. I was motivated to act because of my own experiences in the high school art classroom, as well as the frustrations I heard from my friends who teach. I imagined what the dissertation process might be like; I’d seen friends go through this before me. I also thought about what I might find: that the teachers in this study would each have their own ideas about what a good art teacher looked like.

I am, however, amazed at the complex and rich understandings each of my participants brought to the table. They conceptualized quality in ways I had never
considered before. To them, “being a good art teacher” was a process they continually worked through embodying “quality” in their classrooms. Listening to their triumphs and failures, their good and bad memories, and their future goals, opened a doorway to seeing my research topic in a whole new light. Their insights also allowed me to understand my own process of identity construction, shedding light on the research process along the way.
*** P.P.S. ***

I hope to someday find a copy of my dissertation, open to the front cover, and find that someone has penned five stars on the inside cover.

Then I'll know, to them, it was good.
Chapter 6

ARTS-BASED RESPONSE

Photograph 1: Detail of completed work, “The Good Art Teacher”

***AN ARTIST STATEMENT***

This artwork is about constructing an identity. It is about how we become the person we think we are and the person we want to be. It is about the way material objects give us a sense of self. It is about how we present ourselves to the world through these tangible items.

Each one of these embroidered items represents part of an identity. These objects are the manifestation of an understanding of what it means to be good. They are a measure of goodness. Each of these objects was chosen to confirm or assert an identity.

But, like identity itself, the meanings of these objects, do not reside solely within the presenter. Instead their meaning can be confirmed, challenged, and influenced by the viewer. What does this collection of objects mean to those who view it? What identity does the viewer make from these objects?

This work is a construction of identity. Not any one specific individual identity, but rather, a combined, collaborative, identity, formed in the process of this research study. It is the result of choices made by the participants, made by myself, and made by the viewer.
The Fiber-Arts Based Response

The process of creating this artwork served as a way to understand my research question and to make sense of the data I collected. This artwork also served as a way to present my findings. Sullivan (2006) contends that arts-based research can be used to create new knowledge on a complementary pathway to more traditional forms of social science research. Central to his argument is the idea that research is transformative and impacts the “researcher and the researched” (p. 22). The outcome of research, he suggests, is not only to help explain the causes of things but to understand them deeply and wholly. Arts-based practices can provide a way to gain a deep understanding of a problem or topic. Springgay, Irwin, and Kind (2005) explain that a person can “inquire about educational phenomena through artistic and aesthetic means” (p. 898). Hickman (2007) argues that arts can enhance educational research because they provide an alternative “way of understanding the world which goes beyond language” (p. 315). He suggests that arts-based approaches are useful to gather data and in the “reporting phase.”

Researchers have successfully used arts-based methods to better understand and present their ideas. Springgay (2008) described the way she used artmaking to explore the tension she experienced between her roles as a mother, researcher, and scholar. She explained that she used objects associated with these different roles (hair and soap to represent being a mother) to create an installation “disrupting the social and cultural constructions” of her dual roles. Jongeward
(2009) described how she made artworks informed by her research to “gain energy, clarity, and insight” (p. 241) at critical points in her research process.

While analyzing her data, Jongeward created visual portraits of her participants to provide a glimpse of insight into her participants’ identities and integrity. She explains:

I was working on data analysis, involved in the demands of categorizing interviews and participants’ journal writings. Reading and rereading, comparing and contrasting different aspects of what participants said and wrote, I felt close to their attitudes and perspectives. However, the sustained analytical process of segmenting and coding made me want to have an image of the whole person. (p. 241-242)

She explained that her process of creating these images included focusing on her participants’ passions and struggles, questioning how she could make an image that reflected the complexity of each participant, and making choices about how to best represent each participant in symbols, colors, shapes, and form. Jongeward (2009) believed that completing her arts-based research allowed her to balance the analytical aspects of her research with a holistic perception of her study.

**Arts-Based Research as Process**

I found my own experience with the arts-based strand of this study to be similar to Springgay’s (2008) and Jongeward’s (2009). First, planning and executing this work gave me a way to think about my data and my participants. Rather than just writing about the emergent findings, I had to consider how to represent those findings visually. As I planned and created, my understanding of my research evolved, just as the process of writing memos helped me to better
understand my data for the narrative strand of this study. Next, making these
embroidered pieces while collecting, analyzing, and writing the findings, allowed
me to think about my roles as a teacher, researcher, and artist. I also found that
working this way, both analytically and artistically, provided a balance necessary
to my understanding of the problem and research questions I was studying. For
me, the process of creating this artwork paralleled my process of data collection,
analysis, and presentation in the narrative strand of this study. The steps of my
research process occurred simultaneously with my work on the narrative strand of
this study.

Photograph 2: Teacher Identification Badge

This artwork began accidentally. As I sat on a short metal stool in front of
a ceramics wheel observing Inigo’s class, I began to look at the visitor badges I’d
collected during my classroom observations. For some reason I’d stuck them on
the front and back covers of the lime-green spiral-bound notebook in which I was taking my field notes. There were about 10 of these badges, all similar in size, but each with a different layout and design. Each school I’d visited asked me to wear some type of sticker or badge identifying myself as an outsider. For some reason, at that moment, it struck me: in this study I was not acting as an art teacher in the way I’d thought I was. I came to this study believing my connection to the problem, to the participants, was as a high school art teacher. Yet here were these name tags, staring me in the face, a literal identification of my “otherness.” While

*Photograph 3: Visitor Badges*
I had been an art teacher and could relate to these teachers as an art teacher, I was also an outsider. I was a researcher, I was a PhD student working on my dissertation.

For the next few days I kept thinking about these visitor badges. I began to question my identity in this study. I thought I was a teacher, yet to almost everyone else in this research context, I was a visitor. During my observations and interviews, I worked to assert my teacher-identity and tried to represent myself as a teacher. When talking to students, I used my “teacher voice.” As I interacted with the teachers, I shared stories of my own high school art classroom. I dressed in the way I did when I was a classroom teacher, because I knew the rooms would be dusty and dirty and possibly full of paint. Despite all of that, however, here I was, wearing a badge that said, yelled even, “VISITOR.” This one little object was playing a huge role in who I was in these classrooms. As I continued my interviews and classroom observations, informally analyzing the data I was collecting through listening, thinking, and discussing what I was hearing and seeing with colleagues and friends, I began to notice the way my participants were doing the same thing I was: trying to assert an identity as an art teacher. They were, it seemed at this point, doing this through their interviews and the information they shared with me during the classroom observations.
Photograph 4: Hello My Name Is
It was at this point that I began to embroider. I envisioned a series of embroidered name tags sporting descriptive words related to my own and the teachers’ identities. These words included “caring,” “dedicated,” “funny,” and “real.” I found that the best time for me to work on these embroidery pieces was in the evening after I worked on the written parts of this study. I used the time I spent embroidering these name badges to think about my research. Embroidery served as the vehicle and catalyst for reflection on my findings and emerging ideas, almost as a form of reflective journaling.

I continued collecting and analyzing data for the narrative strand of this study through interviews and observations. I began to notice that the teachers were using more than words to describe who they were. Like the visitor badges had done for me, the teachers were also using objects to assert their identities. I began to notice the teacher identification badges they wore on lanyards around their necks. I noticed that the teachers were quick to illustrate their stories by showing me things from their classrooms: lesson plans, rubrics, good student work, bad student work, awards they won, and photographs of students. I noticed some teachers had their own artworks on display in their classroom. Some of the teachers had awards hung up all over their classrooms. Some classrooms had very plain white walls, while other teachers had painted their classroom walls bright colors, adding murals or inspirational quotes. The teachers talked about their evaluation scores, their college degrees, and their students’ artworks. The teachers even used material objects as indicators of their quality. Postcards and notes from
Photograph 5: Hockney Postcard (Front and Back)
students indicated the teachers had made personal and even long term connections with their student. “Good” artworks meant they had been able to motivate the students enough that they worked hard on their art. Certificates of Appreciation indicated that the teachers were viewed as “good” in the eyes of their peers and administration. These objects, it seemed, were part of who these teachers believed they were.

![Photograph 6: Badges](image)

At this point, my data collection for the arts-based strand of this study became deliberate. I began looking for examples of the objects I observed in the classrooms as well as the objects the teachers described in their interviews. I began taking photographs of the objects when possible. I recorded images of
student and teacher artworks, awards and certificates, as well as classroom spaces. I collected worksheets, handouts, and assessment tools, and stored them in a file box with copies of transcripts and letters of consent. I also continued exploring my own connection to the research topic by making a list of the objects I felt indicated my identity in this research study, collecting objects related to both my teacher and researcher identities.

My artwork began to evolve to reflect this new understanding I had gained: the teachers in the study were describing themselves both through words and objects. I began to expand my artwork, planning for and creating embroidered versions of some of the objects I noticed the teachers using to assert their identities as good teachers. I analyzed the images, documents, and list of objects I collected and began to make decisions about representation: Which objects would translate most successfully into embroidered pieces? How could I represent the more abstract of challenging objects in embroidery? For example, how do I represent “good quality student-made ceramic vases” in a two dimensional work of fiber art?

As I worked on these embroidered objects, I was also coding and categorizing interview data for the narrative strand of this study. I began to find a pattern suggesting that the participants in this study were using a process of identity construction to become the kind of teacher they wanted to be. I returned to the literature, reading about identity to inform the emerging findings. My coding, categorizing, and literature review began to inform my art making. For
example, the emergence of categories that eventually led to my understanding of the identity construction process I proposed, influenced my thoughts about the role objects played in that process. I realized that the objects were an essential part of how the teachers in this study identified themselves as “good art teachers,” serving as physical representations of that identity. Objects were also a part of how I was identifying myself as a teacher, researcher, and artist.

Photograph 7: Ireland Postcard (Front and Back)

In identity theory, Snow and Anderson (1987) assert that people engage in identity work by arranging their physical setting, presenting their appearance, associating with others, and talking about themselves (p. 1348). I found that the
objects I was embroidering, served as part of identity work. These objects were indicators of quality for each of the participants (myself included). For example, Miss M shared a story in which she asserted her identity as a good art teacher explaining how she had reached a student on a personal level. She knew she had done this because the student left her a note saying, “Miss, I miss you! Love, Jasmine.” In this case, the note from a student was an object representing Miss M’s understanding of her identity as a good teacher.

Photograph 8: Note from Jasmine
As I began to work on representing the findings of the narrative strand of this study, I also began to think about the way I would present this artwork as a part of this study. Would I include the images of these artworks throughout the entire final written paper? Or would I include them in their own section or chapter? How would I present them in a setting outside of this paper? Like a gallery or exhibition space? How would each of these choices change the meaning? How would my choices change the way others interacted with the work?

*Photograph 9: Best of Show*
Perhaps ironically, the most challenging aspect of the arts-based research process has been figuring out how to present this artwork. I find it interesting the way presenting this work has paralleled the identity theory that informed this study. I *actively* constructed this work, as one would actively construct an identity, by making choices about which objects to embroider and how to go about embroidering them. I also had to consider how I would write about these objects and about the process of artmaking in a dissertation. These choices were influenced by my own background: my lifelong connection to fiber arts and my ideas about what makes someone a good teacher, researcher, and artist.

*Photograph 10: Floyd*
Finally, in presenting this work I am directly engaged with the social aspect of identity construction. The choices I made here about which objects I chose to represent in fiber, how I display them, and about what I write about the work and the art making process, will now be viewed by other people. As the viewers interpret these objects through their own lenses, with their own understandings, with their own identities, what meaning will they assign? Will they see me and my work in the same way I do? How will their reactions influence my own process of identity construction? How will it influence theirs?

Photograph 11: Teaching Certificate

In this context, my written dissertation, I am presenting this artwork as a reflection on this entire research process. I have presented an image of each embroidered object alongside an artist statement (found on page 189) and an
explanation of my art making process. I hope that the images serve to show my findings, my participants, and my role in the research process, in a way that more traditional forms of presenting research cannot.

I also imagine that like identity, I would make different presentation choices in different contexts. In a gallery space, presenting each embroidered object as a flat individual image may not be visually effective. I imagine that in a gallery space I would present these works in a way that emphasized the social aspect of the identity construction process, by hanging these embroidered objects on a series of clothes lines. The clothes lines would be strung close enough together so some objects were visible at some angles and hidden at others. In this way, the viewer would need to interact with the piece, moving around and within it, to see different aspects of the identity they represent. In a gallery context, the work would also be removed from this written dissertation. The viewer would have only the artist statement to inform them about the work. In this way, they would have to make judgments about who or what identity I have presented with a limited background. Would this change the way they understand the piece compared to someone who has read this dissertation?
References


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCRIPT
1. What are your best memories of school as a student?

2. Who was your best teacher(s)? Why?

3. What are your worst memories of school?

4. What accomplishments in school are you most proud of?

5. Can you think back to why you became an art teacher and tell me about that?
   a. Can you describe, in detail, how you became an art teacher?
   b. Can you tell me about your teacher preparation program? Your student teaching mentor teacher?

6. What is your fondest memory of teaching?

7. What is one of the biggest challenges you’ve had as a teacher?

8. What experiences outside of teaching do you have with art/art making?

9. What are your goals in the classroom? For yourself? Your students?

10. How do you decide about what/how you will teach?

11. Can you give me an example of a successful lesson? How did you know it was successful?

12. An Unsuccessful Lesson? How did you know it was unsuccessful?

13. How do you evaluate/reflect on your own teaching practices? Will/can you give me an example of a time you did this?

14. Do you ever think about the quality of the teachers (and their teaching) you work with? How do you judge their quality? The quality of their lessons?

15. What qualities do you think a good teacher has?

16. What are some of the biggest challenges to being a good teacher?

17. Do you consider yourself to be a good teacher? Why/why not?

18. Do you have anything else you’d like to add? Are there any other topics you’d like to talk about or anything you’d like to go back to?
APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL & LETTER OF CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS
To: Mary Erickson
   ART

From: Mark Rosca, Chair
      Soc Beh IRB

Date: 12/13/2012

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 12/13/2012

IRB Protocol #: 1212008619

Study Title: A Measure of Goodness

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(1).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.
Hello,

My name is Hillary Andrelchik and I am a PhD student in Art Education in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to examine what art teachers think about quality in teaching art.

I am inviting you to participate in this study. Your participation will involve one 60 minute interview, at a location, date, and time convenient for you. It may also involve a follow up interview, as well as potential observations in your classroom for one to two class periods for up to five days. The interview(s) will be recorded digitally and will be transcribed for use as data during this research study. After I transcribe the interview(s), I will provide you with a copy so that you can comment, amend, and/or further explain any of your responses. Based on the initial interviews, I will also be selecting a few participants in whose classrooms I can observe. If you agree to participate in the classroom observations, I will first obtain permission from your district and school and from the students in your classroom. During my time in your classroom, I will take photographs to document my observations. I may also request to collect other supporting documents during this research study, such as student work, your art work, and other related items that may emerge as relevant during the interview(s) or observations. Finally, I would also like to use a photograph of you for an arts related part of my research study.

During all aspects of the research study I will ensure your confidentiality by using a pseudonym for you, the school and district, and any students or other identifiable people. I will remove all identifying markers from any supporting documents, such as taking the names off of student work, removing school/district names, blurring out school names and faces on photographs. In terms of the photographs taken of you for the arts related part of my research study, your image may remain visible. However, by removing all other identifying information from the study, such as names and locations, confidentiality will be maintained as people will not be able to link your image to any specific school or location.

Your decision to participate in this study will remain confidential. Your name will not be linked to any results or outcomes of this study. The results of this study may be published or presented, but your name will never be used.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, or choose to withdraw yourself from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. No one else will be aware of your decision. You can withdraw from this study at any time, for any reason.

While there is not an immediate benefit to you for participating in this study, the information gathered from this study will help to understand how art
teachers think about quality art education and can be used to improve teacher education and preparation in the future.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your participation in this study, please call me at - or email me -. You may also contact my dissertation adviser, Dr. Mary Erickson at -, or -.

Sincerely,
Hillary Andrelchik

• By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in an initial interview for this research study.

Signature                          Printed Name                          Date

• By signing below, you are giving consent to be considered for classroom observations.

Signature                          Printed Name                          Date

• By signing below you are giving consent to use an image of you in this research study.

Signature                          Printed Name                          Date

Signature of researcher__________________________________________________________
Date________________________________________

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965 6788.
APPENDIX C

SAMPLE OF CODING PROCESS:

CODING KEY, CODED TRANSCRIPT, AND CODING LIST
Sample Coding Key

- **red thin pen** 3 original coding, 1st round "good teacher is"

- **green thin pen**
  - challenges
  - how they measure
  - good teacher is - 2nd round
  - bad teachers

- **purple thin** overcoming challenges
Sample Coded Transcript

Interviewer: Yeah, and see the other ceramics teacher, that’s how she is. Super intense. She has them come in, and there’s a PowerPoint up for every single day with their objectives. Then she has sub-objectives and like goals. I have that stuff, but it’s written on the board and it stays the same for the whole project.

Interviewee: For like the two weeks that you’re working on—

Interviewer: Yeah. I’ll give ’em a daily list of, this is what we’re doing today. She does an exit question every single day, and a closure. She’s like, “You really gotta make sure that you open and close your classroom a certain way.” I don’t know.

Interviewee: Yours isn’t so structured like that? Not that it’s like chaos, but not as?

Interviewer: Yeah, I don’t give them an exit question every day. I do if we have extra time and everybody’s just sitting there, staring at the wall. I’ll be like, well, so now here’s a question. Who’s gonna get—and then I’ll give ’em candy.

Interviewer: Sweet. Always works.

Interviewee: I think if you beat them to death with all of that super structured very rigid—I mean, if you’re gonna try to take a ceramics class and turn it into a math class or an English class, they’re gonna get mad at you. That’s not what they’re expecting. You have to just let it go. Let it be an art class. Sure, you’re not gonna run it like a studio ceramics from like college, because they’re high school kids and they need certain things. But give ’em a little bit of that, because that’s what art is about. That’s one of the cool things about it. I think a lot of administrators don’t see it that way, because they’re afraid that, you just can’t come in here and just play with clay all day. But yeah you can, because you’re learning. You’re learning just in a different way. I dunno. Maybe I’m wrong, but that’s how I feel.

Interviewer: No. I don’t know if there’s a right or a wrong, but that’s how I feel. That’s why I was always, I liked always having you in my room. It was like, sometimes I had people come in that would be much different dynamic. Like you would just come in and work, and I think yeah, I think we have similar thoughts on a lot of these things, which doesn’t always happen, as you know. The batting head thing. That’s cool, though.
Sample Coding List

- Being
  - fun
  - ridiculous
  - art was escape/comfort
  - change what they didn't like
  - being a leader
  - hurting little souls
  - liking kids
  - funny
  - get to know them
  - love your stu.
  - invest in stu.
  - change lives
  - love kids
  - doing best
  - work hard
  - being into Art
  - giving 100%
  - always learning
  - enjoy job
  - committed to parents/community/leaders
  - be the teacher I wanted to be
  - be invested
  - enjoy job
  - approachable
  - relate to kids
  - keep kids
  - passion for what you do
  - be there for right reason
  - can never stop learning
  - willing to spend time to get it right
  - trust kids
APPENDIX D

SAMPLE OF CATEGORIZING PROCESS:

CODING KEY, CODING LIST, CATEGORY LIST
Sample Category Key

Things they look for:
- Behaviors
- Attitudes
- Actions
- Work
- Content
- Competency
- Relationships

With students:

- What they do
Sample Coded List with Color Coding for Category Divisions

- Challenges
  - not fitting in
    - so doesn’t do what she “should/used to”
  - colleagues have low standards
    - struggle to fit in w/ that
  - too many preps
  - conflict w/ colleagues
  - not getting what you expected – too many preps 1st year, dilapidated classroom when she started
  - teaching differently than a colleague – port of prob
  - lack of cohesion amongst peers
  - should be reading research
  - Challenges of subject – hard to make up all your
    - own “stuff”
  - school/district curriculum not aligned w/ standards
  - kids getting bored easy
  - I’ve had to fit in
  - get rid of nefrafs
  - colleagues have low expectations for students
  - kids not @ level they should be
  - room size
  - might
  - health issue – knee
  - frustration w/ stv w/e affect
  - lack of community support
    - lack of connection to community
  - Want it one way but turn up got in the way
  - not fitting in
  - being complacent – colleagues assume
    - pick & choose your battles
Sample Completed Category List

CHALLENGES

SUBJECT

- Fire in jewelry class
- Have to make all your own resources

MISC

- Ability to find job
- Being cut but being competent to get rehired
- Fear of getting cut
- They are students, not customers, I’m not trying to sell them something
- Students are so much more than the standards
  - Standards are a framework, but if it does not work for students as people- why bother?
- Lack of time to do extra
- Being confident or apathetic about what others are doing
- Stuff you can’t control
- All stuff besides just coming to your class and teaching your class
- Fighting for everything- eventually you ask, “Why am I fighting?”
- Should observe others but I can’t because there are no other art teachers at the school
- Misconceptions about subject
- Could teach more if there was more available for the students
- Teaching to the test vs. doing things kids could use
- If you can’t test it, it must not be worth anything
- Being pulled my all the parties
  - Admin
  - Peers
  - Students
  - Yourself
- Supposed to go observe other teachers but I don’t have the time
- When other teachers suggest you do something that is outside your comfort zone.
- I should do more, I should- but I get so caught up in what I’m doing (regarding observing other teachers)
- Should be doing but haven’t
- Situation with long term sub- best friend
- Lack of understanding “its just art”
- Not fitting in so does not do what she “should/used to”
• I’ve had to fit in
• Should be reading research
• Want it one way but things get in the way
• Not fitting in
• Pick and choose your battles
• She isn’t good “IN THIS CONTEXT”

COLLEAGUES
• Not being on the same page with those you work with
• Colleagues not being on the same page
• Getting along with colleagues- it is more fun it you do
• Not being on the same page as colleague
• Lack of preparation by students because other teachers didn’t teach the same thing
• Not on same page
• Colleague hid the things that were really bad
• Too rigid
• Not getting along with colleagues
• Not met enough colleagues at the new job
• Colleagues have lower standards than you- how to fit in with that?
• Conflict with specific colleague
• Teaching differently than a colleague
• Lack of cohesion amongst peers (department)
• Colleagues with low expectations for students
• Being complacent
• Colleagues misusing funds
• Non supportive colleague
• No support from colleague

SELF
• Classroom related
  o Knowing a little of everything and not a lot of any one thing
  o Knowing content area to teach new courses
  o Teacher prep was waste of time- too theoretical
  o Classroom mgmt
  o New teacher might overkill with mgmt
  o Being nervous about mgmt and discipline
  o Not having mgmt down
  o Mgmt and behavior when he was new
  o I didn’t do a good job explaining it
  o Being too rigid can cause problems with admin, students, colleagues
o Not being able to advocate for subject
  • not knowing how
  • just not doing it
o kids being from a different culture than she is
  • pregnant
  • bullying
o relating to students
o not having time for students because you are disorganized
o The kids you can’t reach
o When I can’t reach students
o When I can’t motivate students who have no interest
o Challenging students I just don’t know what the crap to do with

• Outside classroom related
  o Exhaustive job
  o Mentally challenging
  o Being stuck in your ways
  o Hard to rethink the way you teach
  o Not having enough energy to stay late and put in extra time
  o Pain in hands made her have to stop teaching specific subject
  o Lowing enthusiasm for teaching
  o If you have issues outside of school makes it hard to care inside of school
  o Being on autopilot
  o Personal issues getting in the way
  o Personal issues taking away what you used to do
  o Being pregnant
  o Feeling like I’m the new kid on the block
  o Knee
  o Personal health
  o Addison’s disease
  o Blood clot in lunch
  o Haven’t been able to do it here- maybe it’s me?
  o Being verbally blunt
  o Personal issues getting in the way of how she thought it should be
  o Going by the skin of her chinny chin chin
  o Injury not allowing you to do what you said

STUDENTS

• Parents
  o Lack of parent support
  o Parents too busy with life to pay attention to students
  o Kids feel lonely/sad and this makes issues in school
  o Lack of family warmth- security is gone and this makes kids demanding
• Don’t care
  o Lack of support from parents
  o Lack of parent support
  o Parent’s don’t respect art

• Backgrounds
  o High poverty and meeting needs at the school
  o Poverty as a struggle
  o Kids won’t take home work because it is not valued at home
  o Homeless kids
  o Kids of poverty
  o Socioeconomic status
    ▪ Goes hand in hand with apathy
  o Lack of background knowledge
    ▪ African mark making story
    ▪ ELL
    ▪ ED
    ▪ AP kids- different breed
  o Sped vs. regular vs. IB students
  o Unprepared students- 9th graders to immature
  o Lack of background knowledge
  o Not being at the level they should be
  o Students not being prepared
  o Lacking background knowledge due to other teachers
  o Forget about learning reading and math you just need to learn how to treat someone
  o Challenging community
  o Challenging environment
  o Rough school- gang school
  o Diverse audience
  o Mixed levels in the same classroom
  o Kids prior knowledge effect the project outcomes

• Attitude
  o Expectations about class
    ▪ Have different expectations about what art class should be
    ▪ Students not understanding what art class is about
    ▪ Why do we have to take art class?
    ▪ Students misconceptions about art- why do we have to write?
    ▪ Students complaining about art class being hard
    ▪ riff raff who think it is an easy class
  o Don’t want to be here
  o Not wanting to be extra involved
  o Kids not dedicated enough to do what is needed
  o Angry students
- Kids have fight in them
- They fight for everything
- Apathy and learned helplessness
- Don’t allow themselves to be creative- stunted
- Students refuse to go there
- Don’t enjoy it because it is hard for them
- Students who don’t care
- No way to motivate students w/o grades
- Students with no interest
- Student apathy (pretty rare in ceramics)
- Work ethic- not the same “here”
- Generation of kids have no work ethic
  - They can’t think creatively
- kids being bored easily
- get rid of riff raff
- students who don’t put in any effort
- kids who don’t want to be there

**Actions**
- Losing kids before graduation
- Losing students to prison
- Kids dropping out being pregnant
- Dropout rate
- Pregnant students
- Pregnant students
- Kids stealing supplies
- Fighting
  - You don’t feel safe
  - Being afraid of the kids you don’t know
- Kids who “cut”
- Kids giving negative feedback about your class- just because they don’t care
- Students speeding through lessons and wanting to “chill”
- Attendance
- Kids being late
- Bullying
- Defiant students being nasty over you have bent over backwards
- When kids give up and don’t try anymore
- Kids who resist and fight you on everything
- Lazy kids
- Kids who waste talent do sloppy work

**OUTSIDE**

- Administration
  - Difficult administration
They bully her but she does not push back
- Lack of support from administration
- Administration does not understand the needs of art
- Admin does not understand art
- Administrative challenges
- Just throw anyone in my class- it is offensive
- Principals not visiting her class- maybe because it isn’t valued
- Changes in admin make a lack of stability
- Principal’s influence in school
- Administration who can’t plan
  - Pawn off things on others
  - Chance schedule constantly
- Admin can’t figure out how to sort kids properly into the class
  - They know it is a problem but don’t know how to fix it
- When admin does not listen to you
- Administrative struggles
  - Getting funds
  - Bureaucratic hurdles

- Policy
  - Politics
  - Education becoming a business
  - Kids don’t get an art grade
  - New teachers have to fit into program
    - March instep
    - Have to think about that more than about the human beings they work with
  - Meetings
    - Professional development meetings are more painful than a poke in the eye
    - Meetings are not productive
    - PLC, staff, new teacher meetings
      - Useless
      - Does not give her what she needs
      - Covers stuff she already learned in college
  - Testing
    - CRT’s
      - I throw in lessons about that stuff
    - riff raff who think it is an easy class
    - assessment can be an issue
    - assessments from other districts not relevant to her class
      - a good standardized art test would validate the subject
      - testing isn’t bad- but it isn’t all there is
- test quality
  - assessment is too subjective
  - assessment didn’t match standards
  - test scores linked to pay
  - AIMS test
  - AIMS test as gatekeeper
- district’s assessment of random student performance
  - what if it is a kid who just does not care?
- Dress code conflict
  - Not appropriate for art class
  - Does not fit personality/style
  - Loses points on student teacher evaluations
- Asinine requirement the state puts out don’t make sense for subject matter
  - If you judge me by my ability to teach vocabulary- you’ve missed the point of what I am doing in my classroom
  - Standardized tests not appropriate for art
  - State mandates have nothing to do with what you ideally want to teach your students
- State focus on CTE- Culinary arts over fine arts
- Getting rid of the arts
  - Having classroom teachers teach art
  - What if they don’t have background knowledge
- Scapegoat of society- ed is first to get cut
- Arts on the back burner
  - Cut funding, constant struggle
- Lack of support from district/administration
- State’s treatment of teachers over contracts
  - Bad for teachers- WE ARE STUCK
- Anti-teacher laws
- People who made laws never taught
- Standards
  - Common core is a joke
    - I decide what to teach then see where it fits with standards
- Stuff being placed on you by district/state/school
  - It’s daunting

- Funding/supplies/space
  - Lack of money reduces the arts-
    - What will the kids have left to write about?
    - Lack of money
  - No money in budget
- Pay
  - Pay/ salary benefits

241
- Not being paid you feel undervalued
- Doesn’t make you want to go to your job
- Underpaid
- Not being paid what we’re worth
  - Makes it hard to choose teaching as a career
- Pay
  - Class size
    - Too many kids - class size
    - Class size
    - Can’t meet social needs/goals because too many kids
    - Not enough supplies/equipment for class size
    - Class size
    - Overcrowded school
    - Class size too big
    - Kids on counters
  - Finances
    - Funding for education
    - Financial struggles for the arts
    - Financial garbage
  - No supplies
    - Not being able to access computer lab
    - Can’t buy supplies - no money
    - Crappy classrooms
    - Dilapidated classroom
  - Room size
    - Space isn’t right for subject - too many different spaces to monitor
  - Closing 54 schools
  - Supplies and space don’t work for class size and class needs
  - Traveling between 2 schools - no space/classroom
  - Being split between schools
  - No curriculum available for subject
  - Curriculum not aligned with standards
  - Not enough classes to meet student needs
    - Not offering the right things
    - Not seeing that THIS is part of the reason students are not prepared

- Evaluations
  - Does not match how she wants to teach
    - District wants scaffolding, but it does not always work for the kids
  - Teaching individuals not teaching for the evaluation
  - I don’t fit the rubric
  - Bad because if they didn’t observe “it” then it never happens
  - Difference in understanding of ideas
What does collaboration look like in art class?
What are you going to do? Fire me? After 30 years?
Really?
- Jumping through hoops
- If they are never in my class, which they are not, they don’t know what I do
- Teachers doing things they wouldn’t normally do
- Flawed evaluation instrument
- Doing stuff you wouldn’t normally do
- Doing things just for the evaluation
- Not too bad if they actually look at what you are doing but bad because some people just jump through the hoops when admin is in the room
- Being evaluated properly
  - On what I’m teaching based on the standards
- Make me do what isn’t normal

Other
- Lack of heart and soul in schools (something that really matters)
- Doing stuff that is not about teaching
  - “Once this is done then we can actually talk about what we’re doing in our classrooms. That’s the whole point.”
- Too many preps
- Too many preps
- Fighting about everything—maybe related to money OR to the admin not caring
- Economy
- Outsiders not understanding the subject
- Society looking down on art
- Not understanding purpose of the program
- Fighting against the community
- Job not what you expected—being tricked
- Lack of support from community
- Kissing butt
How do you measure the quality/goodness/badness of your teaching?
Coding Memo
26 Sept 2013

1) The participants made many comments about how they assess their practice/performance. These comments came both from the direct questions I asked them, like how do you know if a lesson is successful or unsuccessful? And do you reflect on your practice? But they also came from stories they told me about positive or negative aspects of what was going on in their rooms. These comments were not directly related to good or bad, but more about how they look at their own classrooms. During this I found:

2) There seem to be two large categories that emerged from coding for this question. These categories are WHAT TEACHERS DO and WHAT TEACHERS LOOK FOR. The categories are related. There are things, clues or indicators, that teachers use to figure out what is going on in the classroom (look for). But there are also actions that the teachers take to look for or gather those clues (they do).

3) Within the category WHAT TEACHERS DO their actions seem related to what it is they are looking for. For example, if one indicator of a successful lesson is that the students comprehend the materials, then the teacher might check for understanding by taking an exit slip quiz or assessing the students in progress work/projects. Within this large category there are three smaller categories. These categories are BEHAVIORS/ACTIONS/ATTITUDES, CONTENT/COMPETENCY, RELATIONSHIPS. In each of the categories are the behaviors teachers used to look for these things. In behaviors/actions/attitudes, for example, teachers used questioning and self-evaluations to see if students enjoyed the class and were engaged. They used quizzes and in process assessment of student work to see if the students demonstrated competency in the content area.

4) The category WHAT TEACHERS LOOK FOR is full of the clues/indicators that for the teachers indicate something about the class, their lessons, or their overall performance. Within this category there are three smaller categories related to where the clues come from or relate to. RELATED TO THE OUTSIDE are those codes that indicate some outside force such as the ADMINISTRATION, THE COMMUNITY, PEERS or ART SHOWS was an indicator of the quality of their teaching/class. Each of these smaller groups indicated what outside source the indicator came from. For example if a group of the teachers peers constantly told them they were doing well, or people wanted to
join the teachers program, this was an indication FROM PEERS, that the teacher was doing something successful. If students won prizes in art shows this indicated that whoever was running/judging the art show felt that the student products were “good” which directly related back to the teachers practice/attitude, indicating a positive feeling about the teacher/teaching. RELATED TO THE SELF has to do with personal reflective things that teachers look for such as if they enjoy the lesson, or how they compare to other teachers/ their students’ products compare to other students’ products. RELATED TO STUDENTS is the largest category and contains codes in which the clues/indicators relate specifically/directly to students in some way. I will discuss this section in the next paragraph.

4) The category RELATED TO STUDENTS is the largest category of WHAT TEACHERS LOOK FOR. This category is a little complicated in that there are things teachers look for that students do (like a physical action such as working or sharing information). These things, however, don’t stand alone, but indicate emotions or feelings on the part of the students (enjoyment/engagement). For example if a kid comes in to work on their project outside of class time or works quietly during class time these actions are indicators of the student being engaged/enjoying. But this relationship also goes further in that IF students are engaged THEN they will work harder. This hard work will RESULT IN their products being good. Therefore, STUDENT PRODUCTS then become another indicator of being engaged/enjoying the lesson, and the actions which indicate their enjoyment lead to the desired (or positive) outcome.

***

The teachers are equating outcomes with attitudes which relate to behaviors which produce the desired outcomes.

If the desired outcome is a “cool project,” the teachers want the kids to be engaged and enjoy the lesson/project because if they enjoy the product AND are engaged they will make a “cool project.”

Then the relationship gets larger. Students making “cool projects” is also an indicator/characteristic of being a good teacher. Therefore there must also be a set of actions/attitudes that a teacher can do/have that result in the desired outcome. The outcome then is both “cool student product” and “being a good teacher.”
Self Questionnaire for Identity Work

1. What are my most fond memories as a student? As a teacher? Why?

2. What are my least favorite memories as a student? As a teacher? Why?

3. What kind of art teacher do I want to be? What things are important to me in my classroom? What are my goals as an art teacher?

4. How do I know if I am meeting my goals? What do I look for? What do those indicators tell me about my practice?

5. If I feel I have met my goal, what do I typically do? Why?

6. When I find that I haven’t met my goals, what do I do? Why?

7. What challenges do I see to my teaching? What do I struggle with as a teacher?

8. Do I consider myself to be a good teacher? Why or why not?
What is my goal?

1. How do I try and meet that goal?

2. Have I been successful? How do I know?

3. What do I think caused this outcome?

4. What can I do to overcome this challenge?