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# The Way of the Artist Educator: Understanding the Fusion of Artistic Studio Practice and Teaching Pedagogy of K-12 Visual Arts Educators

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Running head: WAY OF THE ARTIST EDUCATOR

The Way of the Artist Educator: Understanding the Fusion of Artistic Studio Practice and  
Teaching Pedagogy of K-12 Visual Arts Educators

A Dissertation Presented

by

Christopher M. Strickland

Submitted to the Graduate School of Education

Lesley University

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for the degree of

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### Abstract

The purpose of this autoethnographic study was to examine the experiences of Artist Educators and how they perceive the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy impacts their creative and teaching practices. This study involved a focus group of six individuals, including the researcher. All the participants were practicing artists, currently employed or recently retired K-12 Visual Arts Education certified in the states of Maine or New Hampshire and members of the Kittery Art Association. This study used a combination of interviews and an arts-based method for data collection. All the data were analyzed and resulted in the following seven findings: (1) The identity of an Artist Educator is synchronized with a call to a vocation. (2) The necessity to create art and teach art simultaneously was intrinsic for Artist Educators. (3) Artist Educators lived a creative life and believed it to be a personal practice that cannot be taught. (4) Both extrinsic and intrinsic factors and conditions can inhibit an Artist Educator's practice. (5) Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors and conditions supported the practice of an Artist Educator. (6) Artist Educators cultivated quality relationships for teaching and learning by fusing their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy. (7) Artist Educators fostered life lessons and embodied wisdom from the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy. These findings and insights acquired have implications for visual arts education practice and arts educator professional development programs. The Way of the Artist Educator paradigm offers an alternative approach for a quality and holistic 21<sup>st</sup> Century Visual Arts Education.

*Key words: Artist Educator, identity, motivation, creativity, fusion, practice*

DEDICATION

*James Rosa*

My “true love,” greatest supporter, and witness in life’s journey.

I am grateful for the way you love and inspire me...thank you!



CMS *True Love* 2013

&

*GOD*

Thank You for your abundant blessings, grace, guidance, and gifts.

“A longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul...” (Proverbs 13:19, NIV)

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As a practicing visual artist, educator, leader, and researcher, who identified as an Artist Educator, I have had first-hand knowledge and experience concerning the significance of the visual arts within education. I have taught visual arts and arts integration in public schools for 16 years. During the last seven years of my tenure, I held the district arts coordinator position which included the responsibility of supervising the K-12 visual arts curriculum and visual arts educators. As a district arts coordinator, I observed and mentored new art teachers and have found it fascinating that their professional practices varied. Although the ideas of uniqueness have been an inherent given, I was perplexed to discover that not all arts educators fused their artistic practice with their teaching pedagogy. As a result, I have been inspired to learn why some visual arts educators continue to engage their art studio practice while others do not, and how their teaching and learning practice have been impacted by synergizing and fusing their artistic studio practice with their teaching pedagogy.

Despite what research has suggested regarding the relationship between the arts and intellectual growth, the value of the arts and arts education has continued to be a controversial issue. Negative assumptions, misperceptions, and a lack of respect and understanding of the arts have led individuals to continue to disregard and devalue the arts and their role in education (Greene, 2014; Robinson, 2006; Tavin, 2010). Furthermore, I have believed that K-12 visual arts educators perpetuated the misperceptions that diminish the arts and arts education, especially when they have not fused their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy. When visual arts educators



have fused their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy, they have demystified the cultural stereotype coined by Georges Bernard Shaw, “Those who can, do; those who cannot, teach” (as cited in Daichendt, 2010, p. 9).

This autoethnographic study explored the concept of identity, specifically that of visual arts educators who identified as Artist Educators, and the significance of fusing an Artist Educators’ studio practice and teaching pedagogy, which has been considered an “anomaly” (Graham & Zwirn, 2010) and rare (Walker, 2013). For the purpose of this study, Artist Educator was a term used to refer to a specific identity that is claimed by a visual arts educator. I was curious to know how my beliefs, practices, and experiences as an Artist Educator compared and related to other individuals who also identified as Artist Educators. I wanted to know what drives individuals to make art and teach art simultaneously, and how this combination impacts their teaching and learning practice. It occurred to me that understanding the identity of the Artist Educator and the force behind the fusion of their practices could help direct our attention to enhancing the quality of K-12 Visual Arts Education programs. For instance, the knowledge acquired from the experience of Artist Educators could also inform how we prepare individuals in pre-service and in-service arts educational programs. This same knowledge could also act as a source of renewal (Dalton, 2012; Wilcox, 2017) to inspire visual arts educators not engaged in a personal studio practice to reclaim their intrinsic nature as artists and to assume the identity of Artist Educator. Additionally, Artist Educator practices could help dismantle the stereotype, “Those who can, do; those who cannot, teach.” which has continued to plague individuals who have been adept both as practicing artists and

effective educators. Essentially these individuals chose to embrace the identity of Artist Educator because they desired “both/and,” rather than “either/or.”

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem this study addressed was that not all visual arts educators synergized and fused their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy. This is a problem for a couple of reasons. First, as Pressfield (2002) noted, “the best and only thing that one artist can do for another is to serve as an example and an inspiration” (p. 20). Basically, if visual arts educators have not engaged artistic processes and their studio practices, then they have not been active role models ready to inspire creative problem solvers and future artists. Foley (2014) further contended that visual arts educators should not focus solely on teaching arts content, but more importantly, they should teach to think and act like an artist, as well as be mindful about “how we teach for creativity.” If it was reasonable to assume that student learning was impacted by the quality and experiences of their teachers (Robinson, 2015; Walker, 2013), then it was important that visual arts educators not only have strong skills and experience as artists (Foley, 2014; Pressfield, 2002, Robinson, 2009, 2013), but they must have had a deep understanding and experiential competency for teaching pedagogy (Adams, 2003; Foley, 2014; McDermott, 2002; Robinson, 2006, 2010, 2015; Seidel, Tishman, Winner, & Hetland, 2009; Palmer, 1997/2007).

Second, the problem of visual arts educators not synergizing and fusing their studio practice and teaching pedagogy incurred a sense of urgency as the purpose of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has been evolving. Schleicher (2012) noted that traditional

education in the past was about “delivered wisdom” and modern education today has been “challenged with enabling user-generated wisdom.” Essentially, modern education has not been interested in students reproducing what they know from the knowledge acquired. The focus of modern education has been for students to demonstrate competency and “extrapolate from what they know and creatively use their knowledge in novel situations” (Schleicher, 2017). In order for this type of authentic educational experience to occur effectively, it required qualified facilitation derived from both competence and experience in any given domain. Consequently, if visual arts educators have not been fusing their artistic studio practice with their teaching pedagogy, then they are not epitomizing an ideal teacher for the modern educational experiences of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Research indicated that the lack of fusion between artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy of visual arts educators has been a prevalent conundrum in the field of arts education (Graham & Zwirn, 2010; Walker, 2013). This lack of fusion had a significant impact on a teachers’ personal and professional identity (Hatfield, Montana, & Deffenbaugh, 2006; Macdonald, 2017; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008; Walker, 2013), as well as the quality of their teaching and learning practice (Foley, 2014; Schleicher, 2017; Seidel et al., 2009). Despite the conundrum regarding numerous visual arts educators who have not fused their studio practice and teaching pedagogy, there were many visual arts educators who did embrace the identity of Artist Educator and the fusion between their art and teaching practices. It was my desire to understand better this phenomenon and learn about the significance of fusion between artistic studio practice

and teaching pedagogy directly from the voices of those individuals who have identified and lived the experience of an Artist Educator.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this autoethnographic study was to examine the perceptions of K-12 visual arts educators regarding their dualistic identity and the extent to which they saw themselves as both an artist and educator; and how they perceived that their role impacted their creative and teaching practices. First, the study explored what drove the synergistic nature of an Artist Educator to fuse the creation and teaching of art. Second, the study discovered the factors and conditions that inhibited and supported the effectiveness of an Artist Educator. Finally, the study identified the ways Artist Educators fused their studio practice and teaching pedagogy and how they perceived that this fusion impacted both their creative and classroom practices. The following three interrelated research questions guided this study:

1. What motivates and inspires Artist Educators to use simultaneously their studio practice to influence their teaching pedagogy, as well as use their teaching pedagogy to influence their studio practice?
2. What are the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of the synergistic practices of Artist Educators?
3. How do Artist Educators perceive the fusion of their studio practice and teaching pedagogy to be impacting their creative and classroom practices?

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms were used throughout this study with their intended, clarified meanings.

**Artist Educator:** The self-identification of visual arts educators who exhibited innate leadership and fused their studio practice and teaching pedagogy into a creative, professional practice and way of life (Booth, 2010; Daichendt, 2010, 2012; Rabkin, 2011).

**Perceptions:** The ability to become aware of something through the senses. It was the meaning-making process (McNiff, 2013; Springgay et al., 2008) and position Artist Educators held based on their knowledge and experiences.

**Significance:** For the purpose of this study, significance referred to the quality (Seidel et al., 2009), importance, and impact of the professional practice of Artist Educators.

**Studio Practice:** The formal epistemological, cognitive, and experiential habits (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2013) that translated into methods, procedures, and processes to engage an individual's creativity and artistry.

**Fusion:** The "combination of discreet elements to create something that might be new and different" (Paul, 2015, p. 252). Within the context of this study, fusion referred to the intuitive process and motivation (Goleman, 2013; Pink, 2009) to synergize and fuse an individual's studio practice and teaching pedagogy (Daichendt, 2010) into a creative, professional practice and way of life.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research study had the potential to make significant contributions to the field of Visual Arts Education. This study was of value in that it honored the voices of the individuals who offered insight and a deeper understanding of the beliefs, values, role,

responsibilities, and behaviors characteristic of an artist-educator. Disclosing this information offered to strengthen the collegial ties of not only the participants involved in this study, but resonated with verisimilitude for anyone reading this research study (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), especially individuals within the visual arts education community. A sense of support for those heeding the call to become Artist Educators was incumbent, as well as a possible sense of renewal (Dalton, 2012) for those visual arts educators that experienced despondence from a lack of the aforementioned synergy.

This study offered insights and practical examples of how Artist Educators fused their studio practice and teaching pedagogy for their teaching and learning practice. For example, greater understanding about the sense-making process and skilled intuition experienced by Artist Educators shined a light on the intuitive experiences connected to creativity, more specifically, art-making. Essentially, context was given to help increase control of the knowledge, concepts, and practices that have shaped the traditions and achievements of artists (Robinson, 2015). Although this study focused on visual arts, the information was relevant to arts educators in other areas such as music, dance, and drama.

This study also provided information that could be useful for institutions of higher education. The data helped enhance the design of arts education programs. Specifically, this study assisted these institutions in their preparation to provide pre-service training and in-service professional development.

Lastly, this study had the potential to demystify the following stereotype surrounding visual arts educators, “Those who can, do; those who cannot, teach.”

Acquiring the perspectives of Artist Educators would expose the various reasons that guide their choices. This study could garner more understanding and perhaps support for the overall profession and advancement of arts education.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

In this autoethnographic study, a conscious effort has been made to use my own experiences as an Artist Educator to ground the research within the context of a defined focus group of visual arts educators who also identified as Artist Educators, and are from the seacoast areas of New Hampshire and Maine. Individuals who did not identify as Artist Educators were not included in this study.

All participants were currently K-12 certified visual arts educators or recently retired visual arts educators who worked or had worked in public schools in Maine or New Hampshire. The data collected addressed an individual's perception of the fusion between their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy and its impact on their professional growth and efficacy. The study also assumed that the data gathered from the interviews and works of art would help to elucidate the conceptual identity of the Artist Educator to provide useful information to help advance the field of arts education, as well as demystify the prevalent stereotype, "Those who can, do; those who cannot, teach."

### **Bias and Relational Ethics**

Due to the nature of an autoethnographic study there are incumbent biases and relational ethics to consider (Ellis, 2007). First, the researcher identified as an Artist Educator, and was considered a cultural insider. Therefore, I intentionally used personal experiences to examine and create a nuanced, complex and comprehensive account of the

cultural experiences and practices related to and in the context of other visual arts educators that identified as Artist Educators (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015). Second, the participants in this study had a pre-existing relationship with the researcher. Therefore, the researcher assumed that the responses from the participants would be open, honest, and candid. Third, the instrumentation utilized were self-designed interview protocols and an artistic expression protocol that focused on the perceptions of Artist Educators which were self-reported and observed.

### **Review of the Literature**

The review of literature served to frame this qualitative inquiry and autoethnographic study, which was positioned within a constructivist worldview approach (Creswell, 2014). The philosophical perspective of constructivism assumed that meaning was constructed through personal experiences and social engagement with the world (Creswell, 2014). This review examined and summarized four distinct bodies of literature that corresponded to the guiding research questions of this inquiry and was divided into four sections.

1. What motivates and inspires Artist Educators to use simultaneously their studio practice to influence their teaching pedagogy, as well as use their teaching pedagogy to influence their studio practice?
2. What are the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of the synergistic practices of Artist Educators?
3. How do Artist Educators perceive the fusion of their studio practice and teaching pedagogy to be impacting their creative and classroom practices?

The first section focused on question one and investigated the perceptions of self and professional identity of visual arts educators. The second section continued to explore



question one through the use of interdisciplinary concepts and information regarding motivation, drive, synergy, and fusion. The third section focused on question two and the value of artistic studio practices. The fourth section focused on question three and examined arts education teaching and learning practices, with an emphasis on visual arts education.

### **Personal and Professional Identities**

The research citing the personal and professional identities of visual arts educators was examined in section one. The literature reviewed ascertained the fundamental importance of an individual's philosophy in regards to the profession of arts education. I examined the distinction between an art teacher, teaching artist, and artist-teacher. Furthermore, I explored the concept of creativity and its significance to the identity of visual arts educators. Researchers included, but were not limited to Booth (2010, 2014), Csikszentmihalyi (1996/2013), Daichendt (2009, 2010, 2011), Freedman (2010, 2015), Graham (2015), Hall (2010), Hetland (2013), Hickman (2010), MacDonald (2017), Rabkin (2011), Thornton (2011), and Zimmerman (2013).

### **Motivation, Drive, Synergy, and Fusion**

The second section of the literature review explored the concepts of motivation, drive, synergy, and fusion as it pertained to an individual's dispositions. The literature and research collected for this section was derived from an interdisciplinary perspective. The following sources that were examined and included were, Csikszentmihalyi (1990/2008), Gardner (2000, 2008), Goleman (2013), Lovat (2010), Murphy, Alexander, & Muis (2012), Pink (2009) and Robinson (2009, 2010, 2013, 2015).

### **Value of Artistic Studio Practice**

The third section of the literature review addressed the value of artistic studio practice. The literature explored further expounded and inferred the relevance of artistic studio practice for education. Literature and insights for this section were drawn from Cameron (2002/2016), Foley (2014), Hetland et al. (2013) and Winner & Hetland (2008).

### **Arts Education Teaching and Learning**

The fourth section of the literature review looked at various perspectives on Arts Education teaching and learning practices. Historical views regarding the purpose of arts education (Dewey, 1934; Greene, 1995, 2014) were analyzed. Research regarding the teaching and learning practices of the arts (Hetland et al., 2013; Tavin, 2010; Winner & Hetland, 2008) and contemporary implications for arts education practices (Campbell & Simmons III, 2012; Marshall, 2016; Seidel et al., 2009) were also considered.

All of the above references within each of the aforementioned sections were an initial sampling and entrance into the discourses of literature that were comprehensively examined. Reviewing these bodies of literature helped to illustrate both the importance of the proposed study and the necessity to acquire perspective from individual voices within a culture-sharing group to understand better the identity of Artist Educators and the phenomenon of fusing their artistic studio practices and teaching pedagogy.

## **Design of the Study**

### **Inquiry Approach**

After careful consideration, I chose to use the qualitative research methodology known as *Autoethnography* to explore my inquiry (Ellis, 2004). Autoethnography

integrated *autobiography* with *ethnography*, and oftentimes the arts, to portray simultaneously a creative process and product. According to Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, (2011) autobiography was an author's attempt to write "retroactively and selectively write about their past experiences" (p. 2) and ethnography was a researcher's study of a "culture's relational practices, values and beliefs, and shared experiences" (p. 3). Therefore, "autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (p. 1). More specifically, the purpose of autoethnography was to examine an individual's cultural identity and analyze personal experience within the context of being "participant observers" (Ellis, 2004) that explore and describe the relational practices, common values, beliefs, and experiences for cultural understanding to both cultural insiders and outsiders. To do this successfully, autoethnographic researchers must have compared and contrasted their personal experience against cultural member experiences using one or more of the following strategies: investigated existing research; interviewed cultural members; and/or examined relevant cultural artifacts (Ellis et al., 2011), such as artistic expressions and creations (McNiff, 2013).

### **Ethical and Bias Concerns**

Like all qualitative studies, there were potential ethical and bias concerns. With respect to autoethnography, relational ethics was complex. Ellis (2007) asserted, "relational ethics recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work" (p. 4). Relational ethics was an important consideration

because it ascertained that autoethnographers reflected upon the inherent implications within their work and “act in a humane, nonexploitative way, while being mindful of [their] role as researchers” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 264 as cited in Ellis, 2007, p. 5).

Likewise, autoethnographers must have also contended with the perceptions and effects of using potentially biased data in their research. Given the subjective nature of personal narrative and creative expression, it was inevitable that issues of bias would be prevalent. The way to mitigate the accusation of bias was directly to confront and substantiate the biasing of data with personal experiences, intentionally showing that there was something to be gained by “saturating observations with your own subjectivity” (Ellis, 2004). Although navigating these ethical and bias issues could be challenging, it was not impossible or arbitrary. Holman Jones (as cited in Ellis et al., 2011) claimed “The goal [of Autoethnography] is to produce analytical, accessible texts that change us and the world in which we live for the better,” making autoethnography an ideal methodology for engaging and honoring the diverse dialectics of human experience and creativity.

Within the context of this study, some of the ways I addressed ethical and bias concerns included the following: (a) identified and acknowledged my own thoughts, feelings, and experiences, (b) soliciting participants who were not my co-workers and were outside of my organization, (c) acknowledging any interpersonal connections I had with the participants, and (d) taking responsibility for the process, including the privacy

and safety of the participants, as well as the integrity of the overall research inquiry (Ellis, 2007).

**Confidentiality and anonymity.** Confidentiality, the rights to privacy, as well as the care and safety of participants in qualitative research, especially autoethnography, were of the utmost importance (Ellis, 2007). Within the context of my research, after informing and receiving expressed and written consent from the participants (Creswell, 2013), all notes were kept safe in a non-accessible password protected computer. Lastly, all research notes and materials were set to be destroyed, (with the exception of the original artwork) within five years upon completion of my dissertation.

### **Role of the Researcher and Participant Selection**

Autoethnographic researchers understand that using *purposeful selection* for sampling was essential to inform the understanding of a research problem and sample size was key to collect extensive detail of the phenomena and data to analyze (Creswell, 2013). Purposeful selection, also known as *purposive sampling* was the deliberate selection of people, settings and activities to provide relevant information for the research inquiry (Maxwell, 2013). Within the context of this autoethnographic research inquiry, I was directly involved as a participant observer and worked with a small focus group composed of five to six participants who were certified K-12 Visual Arts Educators in the state of Maine and New Hampshire, and identified as Artist Educators. The purposive sampling of this study was estimated, based on feedback from the focus group participants, to represent 55% of all the current practicing visual arts educators across the United States that are state certified and/or licensed teachers that engaged an artistic

studio practice and would identify as Artist Educators. Lastly, all the participants chosen to be part of the focus group had interpersonal relationships through professional networking and were members of the Kittery Art Association, a local artistic co-op organization.

Using purposeful selection for participants was appropriate for my autoethnographic research for two reasons. First, as a participant observer, I engaged in “exploratory research focused on understanding truth” (Statpac, 2007-2009) and “seeking to describe and systematically analyze personal experience to understand cultural experiences” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 1). Second, purposeful selection allowed me to employ productive relationships with participants (Maxwell, 2013) and served autoethnographic research similar to the way stratified sampling can be used for grounded theory research. “Like stratified sampling, the researcher first identifies the strata and their proportions as they are represented in the population. Then convenience or judgment sampling is used to select the required number of subjects from each stratum” (Statpac, 2007-2009).

## **Methods**

Within the context of the qualitative research method, autoethnography, I worked with a small focus group and used a traditional interview strategy, as well as an arts-based method for data collection and analysis. Dziak (2016) defined a focus group as “a small group of people that provide opinions and other information about a particular issue. The group is composed of people with some similar characteristics or interests so its members can serve as representative samples of a particular [culture].” Two different

instruments in the form of protocols were designed to address the guiding research questions of this inquiry.

**Data collection.** I conducted data collection and analysis concurrently. I used Autoethnographic data sets in the form of personal narrative to answer and frame the themes of the study. Protocols were designed for the second and third phase of the data collection process. A focus group interview served as the second phase and primary data source. The third phase solicited additional data through the means of artistic expression and the creation of a “self-portrait” from each of the participants in the focus group. Both phases were recorded and transcribed. Additionally, the artistic expressions served as artifact and evidence for analysis.

***Phase 1: Instrumentation and procedure – autoethnographic data sets.***

Within this study, autoethnographic data in the form of personal narrative was collected during the first phase. My observations of arts education culture, specifically artist-educators, derived autoethnographically from the following data sets: personal experience, participation in the Kittery Art Association, and informal discourse with visual arts educators. I specifically framed the personal narrative using the three guiding questions for this research inquiry to create a layered account. A layered account was a narrative form of writing that represents experiences using “vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and introspection” (Ellis, 1991 as cited in Adams, 2008, p. 53) to connect with a reader.

***Phase 2: Instrumentation and procedure - interactive focus group interview protocol.*** The first data collection instrument, an original Interactive Interview Focus

Group Protocol, was designed (Appendix C). Unlike individual interviews, the focus group was a “collective on purpose” and allowed the participants to “interact and influence one another during the discussion and consideration of ideas and perspectives” (Devault, 2017). Engaging in a focus group to explore the personal reasons why the participating K-12 Visual Arts Educators identified as Artist Educators, as well as the fusion between their studio practice and teaching pedagogy provided a unique opportunity to reflect and expand upon constructs of pedagogical practices, beliefs about arts education, and professional identity. The advantage of using focus group interviews allowed for the acquisition of deeply rich and diverse data, that became evident in the transcripts from the personal discourse. Furthermore, this data collection instrument reflected the importance of contingency and verisimilitude for the reliability, generalizability, and validity of the research (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011) to illuminate and connect with both, cultural insiders and outsiders.

***Phase 3: Instrumentation and procedure - artistic expression.*** The second data collection instrument utilized arts-based research (McNiff, 2011, 2013), specifically an a/r/tographic method and protocol (Springgay et al., 2008) to engage the focus group participants in an art-making session as an alternate means of exploring their sense of identity (See Appendix D). The purpose of using arts-based research methods within this context is inspired by the “modes of investigation [as] determined by the nature of the issues being examined” (McNiff, 2011, p. 388). Since the focus group participants are artists and educators, using artistic expression for salient data collection and analysis was



quite appropriate for “creating the circumstances to produce knowledge and understanding through inquiry” (Springgay et al., 2008, p. xxiv).

***Phases 4 & 5: Instrumentations and procedures – individual art analysis and follow-up interviews.***

Upon the completion of phases two and three, I scheduled and conducted an individual follow-up interview and an art analysis meeting with each participant. The follow-up interviews and art analysis meetings were conducted back-to-back at locations chosen by the participants and included places like their home, studio classroom, or a café. All participants had their original self-portraits artistic expressions completed and prepared for an analysis.

As I met individually with each of the participants we “[opened] up conversation” (Springgay et al., 2008, p. xxx) through a discussion and examination of their artwork, as guided by the art analysis prompt of the artistic expression protocol (Appendix G). Upon the completion of the artwork, we examined and “open[ed] up conversation” (Springgay et al., 2008, p. xxx) through a discussion and analysis of their artwork. The advantages of using arts-based research are prolific, as it helped to “illuminate, communicate and expand the overall knowledge base” (McNiff, 2013, p. 25). Using artistic expressions as a data collection instrument ensured accountability to the integrity of both the autoethnographic approach (Bochner & Ellis, 2016) and arts-based research process (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997; McNiff, 2013).

In addition to the art analysis, I engaged each participant with a follow-up interview protocol (Appendix F). After Phase 2, I formulated comments and questions

based on information shared in the focus group interview and the self-portraits that were created. The follow-up questions and comments included my responses to each of the self-portraits and discussion points that needed greater specification. Furthermore, based on my knowledge of the participants, I addressed topics that did not necessarily surface during our discussion in the focus group. For example, during my follow-up meeting with Kay, I asked her to share information about her former career as a freelance visual designer, as well as her entrance into the educational field as a special education paraprofessional, before pursuing visual art education. I did this because I believed it would provide further insight for responding to some of the guiding research questions. Lastly, if needed, participants agreed to engage in additional individual follow-up sessions which had its own protocol (Appendix H).

**Data analysis.** The analysis of data was an iterative process. I begin with data memoing and created initial codes for the guiding research questions. Once the data collection began within each phase, I engaged procedures for coding emerging patterns and themes, such as In Vivo Coding and Process Coding (Saldaña, 2016). Upon the conclusion of each protocol, I reviewed all recordings, transcripts and artifacts from each of the phases and proceeded to classify, re-sort and code data accordingly and then interpreted the findings. The interpretation led to a rich description and narrative that was contextualized in relation to the concepts found within the literature review.

***Phase 1: Autoethnographic data sets.*** The personal narrative derived from autoethnographic data became part of the layered account to represent emergent themes within the research. Through the use of vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and

introspection, I essentially created a collective portrait of artist-educators that reflected both their common and diverse experiences.

***Phase 2: Interactive focus group interview protocol.*** I used both handwritten notes and audio/visual recording technologies to document the discourse of the focus group. I had all audio recordings transcribed for a more careful review and analysis of the data. These strategies helped me examine the perspectives, experiences and language used by the participants during the interview session.

***Phase 3: Artistic expression.*** I engaged participants individually in a verbal analysis of their artwork. Analysis of the participant's "self-portrait" served to gain a deeper understanding of their identity and self-conception as an Artist Educator. Similar to analysis procedures for the focus group interview, I used audio/visual recordings to document the discourse between each participant and myself, as well as handwritten notes for anecdotal data. All audio recordings were transcribed and I also photographed each artistic expression and used it as an artifact for further examination and analysis.

***Phases 4 & 5: Individual art analysis and follow-up interviews.***

Similar to the analysis procedures for the interactive focus group interview in the second phase, I used the Dictopro™ audio digital recording device to document the discourse between each participant and myself, as well as handwritten notes for anecdotal data. All audio recordings were transcribed within one to two days from its occurrence using the NVIVO™ software. During the fourth phase, I engaged participants individually in a verbal analysis of their artwork. Analysis of the participant's self-portrait served to gain a deeper understanding of their identity and self-conception as an

Artist Educator. The analysis of the self-portrait artistic expression was guided by the protocol found in Appendix F.

During the fifth phase, I engaged participants individually in a follow-up interview. The individual follow-up interview served to clarify points that were made during the focus group interview of the second phase, as well as questions I had regarding the self-portraits that were created. The analysis of the follow-up interviews was guided by the protocol found in Appendix G.

**Qualitative validity.** After all the data was collected and analyzed, I used *member checking* to ensure qualitative validity. Member checking is a strategy and process used “to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201) and is achieved through “soliciting feedback about the data and conclusions from the people [studied]” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 126). This strategy was especially important to consider when utilizing the qualitative research methodology, autoethnography, because of the intimate nature and interpersonal relationships between the researcher and the participants involved in the study (Ellis, 2007; Ellis et al., 2011).

Within the context of this study, this process involved bringing the research back to the focus group participants for some reflexive discourse. The participants reviewed the initial autoethnographic narrative and provided final feedback and consent for their representation in the narrative. Engaging in member checking ensured my accountability to the participants, their experiences, and forms of expression that resulted in the overall “description, analysis, and interpretation of the culture sharing group” (Creswell, 2013, p. 197).

### **Chapter Outline**

This study was presented in five chapters. Chapter One introduced the problem, as well as provided a rationale and purpose for this study. The chapter presented an overview of the guiding research questions, definition of terms, delimitations, the significance of the study, and concluded with an explanation for how the study was organized and presented. Chapter Two was a literature review that contextualized and framed this study. A comprehensive examination was done of the following bodies of literature, the personal and professional identities of visual arts educators, the value of artistic studio practice, and visual arts education teaching and learning practices. Interdisciplinary concepts and information on motivation, drive, synergy, and fusion were also reviewed. Chapter Three explained the research design and methodology for an autoethnographic study, and the role of the researcher. Included in this chapter were the participant sampling approaches, instrumentation, and methods for data collection and data analysis. Chapter Four presented the findings of this study and the data analysis. The findings were arranged and organized according to the participants' responses to the three guiding research questions. Chapter Five summarized the study with a review of the overall findings. I drew conclusions and provided implications and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

**Introduction**

As an Artist Educator, I was inspired by the interplay between personal introspection and the desire to learn why some visual arts educators continued to engage in their artistic studio practice while others did not (Graham & Zwirn, 2010; Thornton, 2011, 2013) and how both their creative and classroom practices are impacted by fusing their artistic studio practice with their teaching pedagogy (Hall, 2010; Hetland, 2013; Thornton, 2011, 2013; MacDonald, 2017).

Examining the concept of a visual arts educator's identity was a complicated undertaking due to the complex nature of identity (Gergen, 2000; Kegan 1982, 1994; Miller & Garran, 2008/2017) and range of factors including self-identification, dispositions, artistic practice, and teaching practice. Research further indicated that the synergy and fusion of a visual arts educators' studio practice and teaching pedagogy is considered rare (Walker 2013) and a "significant anomaly" (Graham & Zwirn, 2010, p. 230). I was curious to know what drove individuals to make art and teach art simultaneously and how this intentional fusion impacted their teaching and learning practice. This literature review was positioned within a constructivist worldview approach (Creswell, 2014) as well as the lens of identity theory (Erikson, 1956, 1968; Kegan, 1982, 1994, 2009; Mezirow, 2000, 2006) to address both historical and current cultural contexts in which visual arts educators exist.

The literature reviewed here primarily came from the field of education, as well as interdisciplinary fields of study, including psychology, business, and leadership. Four

distinct bodies of literature were examined: (a) personal and professional identities; (b) motivation, drive, synergy, and fusion; (c) the value of artistic studio practice; and (d) art education teaching and learning practices. These bodies of literature corresponded to the following guiding research questions of my inquiry:

1. What motivates and inspires Artist Educators to use simultaneously their artistic studio practice to influence their teaching pedagogy and how their teaching pedagogy influences their artistic studio practice?
2. What are the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of the synergistic practices of Artist Educators?
3. How do Artist Educators perceive the fusion of their studio practice and teaching pedagogy to be impacting their creative and classroom practices?

This chapter was divided into four sections. The first section focused on question one and investigated the literature on personal and professional identities of visual arts educators. The second section continued to explore question one and focused on the literature on dispositions of motivation, drive, synergy, and fusion through the use of an interdisciplinary lens. The third section focused on question two and the literature on the value of artistic studio practices. The fourth section focused on question three and examined the literature on art education teaching and learning practices.

Having reviewed these bodies of literature helped to illustrate both the significance of my proposed study and the necessity to acquire perspective from various voices of those who claimed the identity of Artist Educators. According to Thornton (2013) the term Artist Educator is “worthy of conceptual development” (p. 28) and further exploration as research has revealed alternative terms and conceptions of identity in regards to visual arts educators. Thus, acquiring first-hand experiences helped to understand better the identity

of visual Artist Educators and the phenomenon and the significance of fusing their artistic studio practices and teaching pedagogy into a creatively authentic, professional practice as a way of life. I began with an overview of the following theoretical frameworks, *constructivism/social constructivism* and *identity theory*, which epistemologically framed this study.

### **Constructivism/Social Constructivism**

Unlike a single theory on human learning, there were various philosophical perspectives found across different disciplines that formed an overarching constructivist theory for learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). In general, constructivism was a theory, which held the assumption that “learning is the construction of meaning from experience” (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 36). For the purpose of my research, I focused on the philosophical perspectives of *constructivism* and *social constructivism* as it pertained to education and human development. The philosophical perspective of constructivism for education assumed that meaning making was constructed through personal experiences and social constructivism for human development was meaning making through social engagement with others and the world (Creswell, 2014). In this section I briefly examined two learning theorists, John Dewey and Jerome Bruner, whose respective constructivist/social constructivist theoretical work undergirds the context and process of my research study.

Although Jean Piaget (1936) was considered to be “the great pioneer of the constructivist way of knowing” (von Glaserfeld, 1990), John Dewey (1934, 1938/1997) was perhaps the most well-known educational constructivist thinker and preminent



philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Regarding his influence, historian and educator, Hilda Neatby (1953), wrote, "Dewey has been to our age what Aristotle was to the later Middle Ages, not a philosopher, but *the* philosopher" (p.22-23).

Dewey's work as a philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer centered upon a moral ideology of the principles of democracy and the educational movement of *Progressivism*. According to Dewey, progressive education was "the education needed to promote and preserve a democratic society" (as cited in Hein, 2012, p.14). In contrast to the traditional Euro-American education of classical scholarship, progressive education was grounded in the purposeful construction of meaning from an individual's own experiences, rather than from the knowledge acquired from a teacher. Essentially, Dewey believed individuals should learn by doing and the purpose of education was to exercise the innate freedom to grow intellectually and morally in order to develop and participate as a democratic citizenship. Dewey (1927/2016) stressed:

To learn to be human is to develop through the give-and-take of communication an effective sense of being an individually distinctive member of a community; one who understands and appreciates its beliefs, desires and methods, and who contributes to a further conversion of organic powers into human resources and values. (p.180)

Ultimately, Dewey's vision for education and citizenship development relied on the processes of social and experiential learning experiences, as well as critical reflection of those experiences for purposeful meaning making (Dewey, 1938/1997).

Like Dewey, Jerome Bruner (1956, 1960, 1990, 1996) was recognized for his contributions to the field of education, especially his earlier theory on cognitive learning and latter views on culture, the mind, and education (Illeris, 2009). Cognitive learning refers to an individual's problem-solving abilities through the construction of their own knowledge (Bruner, 1960). More specifically, Bruner's theory defined learning as the behavioral changes of individuals based on their knowledge, as well as information about the environment (Bruner, 1960, 1967, 1973).

Expanding on Dewey's views, Bruner (1956) believed in the value of meaning making through experiential learning and in particular, he thought sensation and perception were active, rather than passive processes in the construction of meaning. As Bruner's work continued to combine his interest of cognitive psychology with developmental psychology, he believed that an individual's ability to acquire knowledge and construct meaning was enhanced by both personal interest and context. This concept inspired his latter work, the development of a broader understanding of learning and education as a cultural process (Bruner, 1990, 1996; Illeris, 2009). As Bruner (1996) acknowledged, (as cited in Illeris, 2009, p. 161):

[Culture] shapes the minds of individuals as well. Its individual expression inheres in meaning making, assigning meaning in different settings on particular occasions. Meaning making involves situated encounters with the world in their appropriate cultural contexts in order to know "what they are about." Although meanings are "in the mind" they have their origins and their significance in the

culture in which they are created. It is this cultural situatedness of meanings that assures their negotiability and, ultimately, their communicability.

Respectively, the work of Dewey and Bruner helped to define our current understanding of constructivist theory. Dewey's theory of meaning making was the basis for constructivism, the essential ability to construct understanding from personal and social learning experiences, as well as critical reflection. Bruner's theories expanded upon the ideas of experiential learning and reflection for meaning making and extended into social constructivism, the perspective that understanding and knowledge was constructed through social interactions that are both situational and culturally contextualized. Essentially, Dewey and Bruner's theories helped to form the foundational elements of our current understanding of constructivist theory. Table 1 presents the four fundamental elements of the constructivist theory position that researchers must consider for their methodological research design (Creswell, 2014):

Table 1. Constructivist Position and Its Major Elements:

<b>Element</b>	<b>Connotation</b>
1. Understanding	The reflection of learning and meaning making was personal.
2. Multiple Participant Meanings	Understanding was personal; therefore, there are multiple perspectives and possibilities attributed to meaning making.
3. Social and Historical Construction	Meaning making experiences were contextualized within the presiding cultural norms and interactions with others.
4. Theory Generation	The researchers' ability to discover themes and patterns to interpret meaning that others had about the world.

Subsequently, constructivism/social constructivism was an appropriate frame for my research study of Artist Educators because the basic assumptions of constructivism, the processing and meaning making from an individual's experiences which were shaped by sociocultural context (Merriam & Bierema, 2014), was emblematic of both a visual

arts studio practice and teaching practice. Furthermore, the design of my research study was fashioned upon the four fundamental elements of constructivism: (a) the researcher positions him/herself within the research, which aligned with constructivist element #1, Understanding; (b) the study addressed the interactive and contextual settings of participants, which aligned with constructivist element # 3, Social and Historical Construction; and (c) the researcher used open ended questions to examine the complexity of subjective views and meanings collected, which aligned with constructivist element #2, Multiple Participant Meanings and constructivist element #4, Theory Generation (Creswell, 2014). In addition to the constructivist theoretical framework, I employed the use of identity theory to help frame my study.

### **Identity Theory**

Identity theory was a complex examination of identity, identity formation and development. For the purposes of my research, identity theory falls under a psychological lens through which an individual contextualizes his or her sense of self in relation to society, and the subsequent cultural relativism and meaning of their identity (Burke & Stets, 2009; Gergen, 2000, 2009; Miller & Garran, 2008/2017). In an effort to simplify and contextualize the complex nature of identity and identity formation for visual arts educators, I narrowed the focus of identity theory and began with an overview of the seminal work of Erik Erikson (1956, 1968), and his contemporaries Robert Kegan (1982, 1994, 2009) and Jack Mezirow (2000, 2006).

Erik Erikson (1956, 1968) created a formalized psychological concept of identity that served as the foundation for Western identity research and what was known as

identity theory (Kroger, 2017). Erikson's concept of identity was based on his psychosocial theory of *self-identification* and *identity formation*. Self-identification was derived from the mutual interaction between an individual and context and identity formation was a process of self-actualization by navigating through a series of eight developmental stages of an individual's ego during their life span (Kroger, 2017). I intentionally choose not to delve into great detail about Erikson's (1968) eight ego developmental stages because it can tangentially deter focus from this paper or research. Erikson's relevance for my research was that his concept of identity was constructivist in nature and his work inspired the identity work of other theorists, like Gergen (2000, 2009), Kegan (1982, 1994, 2009) and Mezirow (2000, 2006). Erikson's psychosocial theory served as an entrance into understanding identity because of its direct connection to career choice and the formation of an individual's sense of self. Identity, also referred to as social identity, is the term used to connote "self." The concept of identity derives meaning through the complex process of classifying and interpreting the multiple roles an individual occupies within society (Miller & Garran, 2008/2017), their affiliations and memberships with particular groups, as well as accepting identification from particular characteristics that are considered unique (Burke & Stets, 2009). Thus, an individual's identity formation was social and became a cultural construction as a result of the "mutual interaction of an individual and context" (Krogen, 2017). For visual arts educators, identity formation encompassed a myriad of roles, affiliations and beliefs an individual discovered introspectively between his/her self and society.

Within this paper, identity theory and identity formation were used synonymously

and essentially to referred to human learning and understanding of identity. As Jarvis (2006, 2007) asserted, this was the process of a person continually learning “to be.” For the Artist Educator, Jarvis’ (2006, 2007) notion of learning “to be” was one that was paralleled with Mezirow’s (2000, 2006) theory of transformational learning and Kegan’s (1982, 1994, 2009) constructive-development approach. Jack Mezirow (as cited in Illeris, 2009, p. 92) defined transformational learning theory as:

The process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumption and expectation – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change. Such frames are better because they are more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action.

Robert Kegan provided another context for understanding Jarvis’ and Mezirow’s concept of learning “to be” with his constructivist-development approach. A constructivist-development approach was the theory that an individual's perception of reality was a construction of their psychological predispositions and personal knowledge, as well as societal influences (Kegan, 1982). This approach highlighted a process of evolving experiences that developed into a form of knowing that “consists of the relationship between the subject and object of one’s knowing” (Kegan, 2009, p. 45).

Both Mezirow and Kegan’s respective theories, transformational learning and constructivist-development approach, directly connected to the identity formation of visual arts educators. Essentially, the concept of learning “to be” and identity formation of visual arts educators required an understanding of the critical meaning making

attributed to either aesthetic teaching and learning experiences of the visual arts studio classroom and/or engagement with creative processes and materials to create visual artworks.

Finally, within the context of this study the terms *identity, position, and role* were used in reference to a visual arts educator's identity based on their life and work. As previously mentioned, identity or social identity were terms used to connote self and was a label used for self-identification in relation to personality and interaction with others (Burke & Stets, 2009; Miller & Garran, 2008/2017). Position and role were interchangeable terms within this context, but it was important to note that "positions are classifications of people; roles are classifications of behaviors," (Zwirn, 2002) and both refer to the self-awareness and status ascertained from a desired professional occupation (Burke & Stets, 2009). Self-actualization unified the perception of who an individual was and the objectification of what an individual does (Burke & Stets, 2009; Krogen, 2017).

### **Personal and Professional Identities**

In an effort to simplify the complex concept of identity formation (Burke & Stets, 2009; Erikson, 1958, 1968; Gergen, 2000; Jarvis, 2006, 2007; Kegan 1982, 1994, 2009; Krogen, 2017; Mezirow, 2000, 2006; Miller & Garran, 2008/2017), I focused on identity as it specifically pertained to visual arts educators. Bernard Young (2013) reminded us that the search for meaning within identity was universal. This was especially true for visual arts educators who struggled with being both an artist and an educator (Daichendt, 2009, 2010; Hall, 2010; Thornton, 2011, 2013; Walker, 2017). Viktor Lowenfeld (as cited in Young, 2013, pp. 53-54) championed the idea that visual arts educators should

“deeply explore the connections between self-identification, art, and culture,” because it cultivated an understanding for the complexity of identity and inherent expression of a creative individual.

Daichendt (2009, 2010) further maintained that the struggles surrounding identity, particularly that of an artist/art teacher, were ongoing and perhaps always will be. There were two kinds of struggles, one internal and one external. The first, an internal struggle, deals with how individuals see themselves. Alan Thornton (2011) noted that the complexity of identity was gripped and ripe with internal conflict and personal struggle for many visual arts educators:

There seems to be a variety of difficulties some experience regarding identity.

There are [art teachers] who feel uncomfortable because they are not making art.

There are [teaching artists] who feel uncomfortable for not devoting themselves more to teaching. There are [artist-teachers] who believe they can only function in both roles if they keep them separate... not sure of whether to act as teachers or artists, [or both] when working with students. (p. 35)

The second, an external struggle, dealt with the societal perceptions of visual arts educators. For visual art educators, identity was an important aspect of their sense of self and being, especially in a world that does not necessarily value the arts or arts education (Graham, 2014; Greene, 2001; Hanawalt, 2013; Kohl & Oppenheim, 2012; Robinson, 2010). Society’s expectations, negative assumptions, misperceptions, and a lack of respect (Tavin, 2010) and understanding of the arts (Greene, 2014) lead individuals to continue to neglect the role of visual arts educators, as well as devalue the arts and its



place in education (Kohl & Oppenheim, 2012; Robinson, 2006, 2010, 2015). Thus, visual arts educators become marginalized by societal misperceptions and struggle with “how others identify [visual art educators] and how [visual arts educators] see themselves” (Thornton, 2013, p. 43).

The fact that individuals were continuously reconciling assumptions and redefining how they saw themselves made it difficult to hold a ubiquitous name or concept of visual arts educators in the process of identity formation. This struggle of personal and professional identity had led to a myriad of self-identification labels, as well as concepts that have been used to describe visual arts educators over the course of history.

### **Old Paradigms: Art Teachers, Teaching Artists, Artist-Teachers**

There were several identities and conceptions visual arts educators used to define oneself. The most germane concept and common identity was *art teacher*. According to Daichendt (2010), Efland (1990), Hall (2010), and Thornton (2011), the traditional and historical identity for an art teacher resided in their utilitarian function. The primary function of an art teacher was considered the instruction of visual arts, specifically the fundamentals of art history, art appreciation, as well as artistic processes using designated materials and techniques as a means for artistic development of their students (Thornton, 2011). Individuals who identified as art teachers were traditionally trained and certified in art education; however, they did not always engage in their own art making or studio practice (Daichendt, 2010; Thornton, 2011).

Conversely, some visual arts educators would identify and consider themselves *teaching artists* or *artist-educators*, because their focus was on art making and studio practice, rather than teaching the fundamentals of art education. According to Booth (2010), “a teaching artist is a practicing professional artist with the complementary skills, curiosities and habits of mind of an educator, who can effectively engage a wide range of people in learning experiences in, through, and about the arts.” However, unlike an art teacher, teaching artists were trained and certified in the fine arts or studio arts. They were typically not trained as an educator and became resources for school curriculums, most commonly referred to as “artists-in-residences” (Booth, 2010, 2014; Rabkin, 2012). Teaching artists assisted and collaborated with certified teachers and “have played a pivotal role in the development of arts integration” (Rabkin, 2012, p. 14) for arts education in schools.

A third title, *artist-teacher*, was offered for those individuals who identified as both an artist and teacher. The term artist-teacher was epitomized by Hans Hofmann, a 20<sup>th</sup> Century abstract artist and teacher, as his “development and practice of bringing art-making and artistic experience directly into the classroom was a distinct signifier of his role as an artist-teacher” (Daichendt, 2009, p. 119). Daichendt (2009) further elaborated on the artist-teacher identity:

Artist-teacher is an inclusive educational philosophy and not one that emphasizes a particular educational background or professional role. The notion of artist-teacher is about bringing together studio practices, problems, and art world discussions to improve learning. The variety of methods and practices by artist-

teachers in the classroom reflects the range of artistic approaches artists utilize. (p. 37)

The artist-teacher was an alternative identity that began to philosophically synergize the important features between an artist and teacher (Thornton, 2013). However, because Daichendt's (2009, 2010) artist-teacher identity did not emphasize a particular educational background or professional role, this allowed for further societal scrutiny over the identity and role of the visual arts educator. Because societal perceptions had a hard time acknowledging the complexity of identity, this caused marginalization and conflict for individuals who struggled with identity and a sense of self. This was especially true for disenfranchised visual arts educators who experienced a lack of support from society in general and locally within their educational work environments (Hanawalt, 2015; Hickman, 2010; Thornton, 2013). As Hickman (2010) indicated, "authentic self-expression entails genuine individualized responses to learning... which in turn requires reflection and an environment which is supportive" (p. 114). Consequently, visual arts educators must reconcile societal perceptions with their personal values and beliefs to formulate a personal and professional identity that reflects their artistry and pedagogy (Grunder, 2016; Hanawalt, 2015; Kraehe, 2015; Maatta & Uusiautti, 2013; Thornton, 2011, 2013).

Several researchers had begun to explore the potential of synergy in relation to artistry and pedagogy, (Daichendt, 2010; Hall, 2010; Hetland, 2013; Hickman, 2010; Graham & Zwirn, 2010; and MacDonald, 2017). Abbey MacDonald's (2017) examination of the practice of artist/art teacher revealed that "teaching and art making

have a powerful capacity to support and enrich one another...” (p. 172). The capacity alluded to by MacDonald is centered on the concept of creativity as both a cognitive and emotional disposition and understanding the purpose in educating for creativity (Graham, 2015; Hetland, 2013).

### **Creativity**

Creativity was a large, complex concept and was the focus of various research studies. The concept of creativity has enthralled many across different disciplines throughout time. Dewey (1940) described creativity as “the authentic expression of any and all individuality” (as cited in Hickman & Alexander, 1988, p. 226). May (1975) defined creativity as “the process of bringing something new into being” (p. 40). Cameron (2002/2016) described creativity as a spiritual experience that was “grounded in reality, in the particular, the focused, the well observed, or the specifically imagined” (p. 82), and Goleman (2013) endorsed creativity as a process that “entail[s] joining elements in a useful, fresh way” (p. 43). Within the context of this paper and study, creativity was considered a highly regarded disposition of visual arts educators and I focused on the definitions of creativity as described by Ken Robinson (2015) and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996/2013).

Robinson (2015) claimed “creativity is the process of having original ideas that have value” and “imagination is the root of creativity, and innovation is putting new ideas into practice” (p. 118). He further contended, “creative work in any domain involves increasing control of the knowledge, concepts, and practices that have shaped that domain and a deepening understanding of the traditions and achievements in which it is

based” (p. 103). Csikszentmihalyi (1996/2013) expanded upon this concept by stating, “creativity does not happen in people’s heads, but in the interaction between a person’s thoughts and a sociocultural context” (p. 23).

Despite its various definitions and applications, creativity was an undeniable phenomenon and invaluable human experience. Within the context of art and art education, Freedman (2015) noted that “the creative production of art with its related self-expression, playfulness, and risk-taking, is part of the human condition” (p. 44) and “creativity supports a social network of learning in and through the Arts” (p. 50).

For visual arts educators, creativity was understood within a social constructivist perspective for meaning making that was both personal and communal in nature. For example, creativity could be understood in artistic terms as a personal act of responding and creating a work of art for cultural influence (Freedman, 2010); and creativity could also be viewed in educational terms as an essential learning and life skill (Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills, 2011), cultivated by engaging students in communal learning and meaning making from engaging in experiences like visual art making (Hetland et al., 2013), aesthetic encounters (Greene, 1995, 2001) or even arts integration practices (Diaz & McKenna, 2017).

For the Artist Educator, creativity is the ideal spark that fused both the creation of art and teaching practice (Bastos & Zimmerman, 2015; Campbell & Simmons III, 2012). For the Artist Educator, creativity was not only an expected outcome of art education, but it was a critical process for holistic practice (Zimmerman, 2015). The intention to fuse an individual’s artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy was born out of a greater

desire to fashion a creatively authentic, professional practice as a way of life. In this regard, creativity was not only a disposition, it became a form of leadership (Freedman, 2010) and at the heart of creativity is intrinsic motivation (Graham, 2015). For the Artist Educator, the desire to fuse the creativity from their artistry and teaching derived from additional dispositions like motivation and drive. The following section further elaborated on the dispositions of motivation and drive, as well as the concepts of synergy and fusion, as they could influence the construction of identity for visual arts educators.

### **Motivation, Drive, Synergy and Fusion**

An individual's identity greatly depended upon his/her innate *dispositions*. Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2017) defined disposition as a "prevailing mood, tendency, or inclination." An individual's characteristic attitude and inclination was a delicate balance between their cognitive and emotional outlook. For example, a visual arts educator's motivation, drive, and sense of synergy could profoundly influence their perspective and actions. For visual arts educators that identified as an Artist Educator, engaging a creative life is the primary factor for their sense of motivation, drive, and more importantly, the fusion of their art and teaching. It was important to specify what I meant by the terms *motivation*, *drive*, *synergy* and *fusion*. This analysis was done through the use of an interdisciplinary lens. In addition to the field of education, fields including psychology, science, business, and leadership were explored. I then contextualized these terms in an effort to distinguish the identity of Artist Educators.

## **Motivation**

Daniel Pink (2009) described *motivation* as “the sets of assumptions and protocols about how the world works and how humans behave, that run beneath our laws, economic arrangements and business practices” (p. 225). Motivation could be distinguished into two basic categories, *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*. Intrinsic refers to internal needs, and the joy of the task being its own reward. Extrinsic refers to external and environmental factors, rendering rewards or consequences. Motivation, as it pertains to creativity, holds both intrinsic and extrinsic contexts for visual arts educators. Intrinsically, Artist Educators reveled in the process of creativity for its own merits associated with the joy of learning and problem solving. Extrinsically, Artist Educators are compelled to engage creativity to communicate the human experience in order to enlighten their world. In his book *Focus*, Daniel Goleman (2013) explored the concept of motivation with the interchangeable word “focus.” He provided a prime example of motivation, as it pertained to creativity, for Artist Educators when he noted the following:

A classic model on the stages of creativity roughly translates to three modes of focus: orienting, where we search out and immerse ourselves in all kinds of inputs; selective attention on the specific creative challenge; and open awareness, where we associate freely to let the solution emerge – then hone in on the solution. (p. 42)

Goleman’s example was a representation of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as it could refer to creativity as the practice of art making, as well as engaging the practice of teaching and learning with students. Goleman’s (2013) use of the

word focus was not only interchangeable with the word motivation, but it could also be connected to the concept and term drive, as used by Pink (2009).

### **Drive**

Daniel Pink (2009) described the concept of *drive* as “our innate need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world” (p. 10). The disposition of drive was deeply connected to an empirical sense of purpose and being. In the same way creativity served motivation, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi asserted, “purpose provides activation energy for living” (as cited in Pink, 2009, p. 132). The purpose that drives Artist Educators was explained by Murphy, Alexander, & Muis (2012):

From a social constructivist perspective, individuals come to know through authentic or meaningful participation in learning-rich environments and are apprenticed into communities of practice by more knowledgeable others and more capable peers... through these interactions, individuals acquire the language, tools, and signs of the community of practice. Individual experiences become intricately woven into the fabric of the discourse. As participants in the discourse, learners incorporate ways of thinking and behaving that foster the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to support knowledge acquisition, transfer, and even independent learning. (pp. 215-216)

Drive was a particularly significant disposition that was emblematic for an Artist Educator. Fusing one’s artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy is motivated by the desire to create and live a creative life by expanding one’s abilities to make a significant



contribution to the world (Pink, 2009). To make such a contribution, Artist Educators must first understand and then expand upon the premise of synergy.

### **Synergy**

*Synergy* was interpreted as the purposeful and harmonizing integration of distinct elements (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990/2008; Lovat, 2010; Pink, 2009; Richter, 2016). Within the context of visual arts education, synergy referred to the alignment of the creative energy from the elements of an individual's studio art practice and teaching pedagogy. Synergy produced optimal experiences that were profoundly engaging and satisfying (Pink, 2009) and commonly referred to as *flow*. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) coined the term flow and defined it as a mental state in which a person performing an activity was completely immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment of the activity. Pink (2009) expanded on Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow, and noted that "in flow, people lived so deeply in the moment, and felt so utterly in control, that their sense of time, place, and even self melted away" (p. 113), because the experience was *autotelic*, "which is Greek for something that is an end in itself" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996/2013, p. 113). It comes as no surprise then that visual arts educators understand the visual arts are autotelic in nature and could induce the flow experience through creative expression.

Goleman (2013) further expanded on Csikszentmihalyi's and Pink's thoughts on the phenomenon of flow and added, "[if] full focus gives us a potential doorway to flow... [then] one key to more flow in life comes when we align what we do with what we enjoy" (pp. 22-23). Robinson (2009, 2013) referred to the idea of "aligning what we

do with what we enjoy” as one’s *element* and “the element is the meeting point between natural aptitude and personal passion” (p. 21). For visual arts educators who identified as Artist Educators, there were two defining elements: (1) artistic studio practice, and (2) teaching pedagogy.

Robinson (2013) contended that “finding your element is a quest to find yourself” (p. 5), and “being open to new experiences and to exploring new paths and possibilities in yourself and in the world around you” (p. 27) was necessary to cultivate inner congruence and discover one’s identity. Csikszentmihalyi (1990/2008) stated that “inner congruence ultimately leads to that inner strength and serenity we admire in people who seem to have come to terms with themselves. Purpose, resolution, and harmony unify life and give it meaning by transforming it into a seamless flow experience” (pp. 217-218). To attain this type of flow experience as an authentic practice and way of life involved fusion on the part of Artist Educators.

### **Fusion**

*Fusion* was defined by Paul (2015) as the “combination of discreet elements to create something that might be new and different” (p. 252). Artist Educators employed fusion (Moustakas, 1994; Paul, 2015) by harnessing motivation and drive intentionally to unite the creative energies from artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy; they deliberately choose “both/and,” fusing together a whole new professional practice. Within this context, fusion was powerful and advantageous for Artist Educators because through it an extraordinary balance is achieved between the dispositions, passions, and professional qualifications one possesses (Walker, 2013) to create an authentic,

professional practice that became a way of life and was a form of relational being in the world.

When an individual claimed the identity of Artist Educator, they were inherently “inventing powerful and useful lives for themselves” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990/2008, p. 235) and “[attaining] flow as an ethic for living” (Pink, 2009, p. 113). Essentially, as Artist Educators employed fusion they satisfied what Daniel Pink (2009) called “our deep-seated desire to direct our own lives, to extend and expand our abilities, and to make a contribution” (p. 145) to the world. The next section examined artistic studio practice and explored why it is a defining element for an Artist Educator’s identity, as well as its relevance for education.

### **Value of Artistic Studio Practice**

Parker Palmer (1997/2007) emphasized that “good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (p.10) because “we are drawn to a body of knowledge [that] shed[s] light on our identity as well as on the world” (p. 26). For the visual arts educator who identified as an Artist Educator, this meant embracing the duality of their identity, as both a teacher and especially as an artist, since this was the lens through which the world was viewed and meaning making occurred (Walker, 2013). Therefore, to honor one’s integrity as an Artist Educator, one chose to engage in his/her artistic studio practice because the value of artistic studio practice is “modeling artistic processes, inquiry, and habits” (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, & Hetland, 2009, p. 35).

The value of artistic studio practice could be understood from a personal perspective. Cameron (2002/2016) equated the personal importance of artistic studio

practice to the air we breathe when she declared, “creativity is oxygen for [artist’s] souls” (p. 181). Daichendt (2012) also contended that personal knowledge is gained from the experiences that are “developed out of [one’s artistic] studio practice” (p. 69) and according to Hickman (2010), the arts provide a deeper awareness of the world that transcends verbal and written language. For the Artist Educator, the value of artistic studio practice is within the journey of self-discovery and the ability to express creatively oneself through the knowing that comes from engaging with the arts.

The value of artistic studio practice could also be understood from a communal perspective. When teachers, just as their students, engaged in artistic studio practice it allowed them the following three opportunities: (a) to discover themselves, (b) to think and solve problems like an artist, and (c) to engage creatively with artistic materials and processes for expression.

### **Self-Discovery**

When an individual engages in an artistic studio practice, they embark upon a journey of self-discovery. Cameron (2002/2016) explained “art lies in the moment of encounter: we meet our truth and we meet ourselves; we meet ourselves and we meet our self-expression. We become original because we become something specific: an origin from which work flows” (p. 82). Self-discovery through artistic practice became a reflective process for understanding identity and honoring individual voice. Daichendt (2012) avowed, “the voice of the artist is important to reflect upon because it leads to better understanding for themselves and others” (p. 69). Learning about oneself and being able to express such understandings generates a sense of connection with others and

exemplified what Brené Brown (2017) referred to as *true belonging*, “the practice of believing in and belonging to yourself so deeply that you can share your most authentic self with the world” (p. 40).

### **Critical Thinking Skills**

One of the goals of Artist Educators was to help their students develop both creative and critical thinking skills to tackle twenty-first century problems (Hetland, 2013). Foley (2014) asserted that in the twenty-first century, “[visual] arts education needs to focus on developing learners that think like artists... learners that are creative, curious, seek questions, develop ideas and play,” because the arts are essentially “another way of knowing the world” (Hetland, et al, 2013, p. 4). Engaging in artistic studio practice provided opportunities for students to think like artists (Hetland, et al., 2013) and cultivate critical thinking skills. As Winner and Hetland (2008) noted, the “arts teach vital modes of seeing, imagining, inventing, and thinking,” (p. 31) allowing students to “develop the capacity to think creatively and the capacity to make connections,” (Foley, 2014) which were essential skills for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning (Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, 2007). Thus, thinking like an artist allowed for individuals to envision creative solutions to complex real-world problems.

### **Creative Expression**

If creativity was defined as a process and was understood as a disposition, then creative expression would be the result or outcome of engaging an individual’s creativity. Within the context of this paper, creative expression referred to the creation of Art. Howard Gardner (1973/1994) declared, “Art is the communication of subjective

knowledge” (p. 30) and is a form of creative expression. Robinson (2015) further expounded on this concept and stated:

The arts are about the qualities of human experiences. Through the arts, we give form to our feelings and thoughts about ourselves, and how we experience the world around us. Learning in and about the arts is essential to intellectual development. The arts illustrate the diversity of intelligence and provide practical ways of promoting it. The arts are among the most vivid expression of human culture. To understand the experience of other cultures, we need to engage in their arts. Engaging with the arts of others is the most vibrant way of seeing and feeling the world as they do. (pp. 142-143)

Creative expression was about engaging with artistic materials and learning to control them to articulate and resolve intentions (Hetland et al., 2013). The messages conveyed through creative expression not only represent a thought, feeling, or personal meaning regarding the human experience, but they served as a means for reflection. Creative expression could “alter our thinking, cause us to rethink what we understand, and highlight issues of importance” (Daichendt, 2012, p. 71) that directly affect our lives and world.

Gardner (2008) asserted that “students need to understand why they are learning what they are learning and how this knowledge can be put to constructive uses” (p. 142). When Artist Educators engaged students in artistic studio practice, they were modeling and providing “artistic exploration, emotional openness, development of a sense of ownership and reflective practices” (Seidel et al., 2009, p. 44); which could “help us

understand issues that are complex and multifaceted” (Daichendt, 2012, p. 81) and lead to creative solutions for complex problems. Understanding the value of artistic studio practice, we now turn to another element of equal importance to the Artist Educator’s identity: teaching pedagogy. The next section explored visual arts education practices; the purposes for artistic development and the valuable role of the arts in a twenty-first century education.

### **Art Education: Teaching and Learning Practices**

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, scholars had considered the role of the arts and benefits of arts education (Cohen, 2017; Hetland, 2013; Hetland & Winner, 2001; Marshall, 2005, 2016; Diaz & McKenna, 2017). They had provided general conceptions that were used to promote arts education (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002; Greene, 1978, 1995, 2014; and Stevenson & Deasy, 2005). John Dewey (1934) was a proponent for learning about the arts and aesthetics because they innately promoted what he called “educative experiences” which are necessary for an individual’s growth and development. “Art, in its form, unites the very same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy, that makes an experience to be an experience” (p. 50). Dewey believed that the arts were vital to the senses of meaning making, and engagement with the arts benefitted the overall educational experience of the individual.

Maxine Greene (1978) added to Dewey’s claims and further supported the necessity for aesthetic education and arts education. Greene believed that aesthetic experiences “provide a ground for the questioning that launches sensemaking and the

understanding of what it means to exist in the world” (p. 166) and “art[s] education, like aesthetic education, can create domains where there are new possibilities of vision and awareness” (p. 196). Greene (1995) believed that “art offers life” (p. 132) and the significance of the arts for both personal and communal growth, discovery, and problem solving was critical for cultural and global sustainability.

Elliot Eisner (2002) concurred with both Dewey and Greene and added to their argument for the benefits of arts education by emphasizing the concepts of individual expression and imaginative capacities. In this manner, arts education is a “process of learning how to become the architect of [one’s] own experience and therefore, learning how to create [oneself]” (p. 24). Eisner (2009, pp. 6-9) also believed that the arts and creative processes innate to the arts could offer a powerful model for educational systems and their practices. Table 2 presents Eisner’s thoughts on what he believed the field of education could learn from the arts.

Table 2. What Education Can Learn from the Arts

1. Form and content cannot be separated. How something is said or done shapes the content of experience.
2. Everything interacts and there is no content without form, and no form without content.
3. Nuance matters. To the extent to which teaching is an art, attention to nuance is critical.
4. Surprise is not to be seen as an intruder in the process of inquiry but as a part of the rewards one reaps when working artistically.
5. Slowing down perception is the most promising way to see what is actually there.
6. The limits of language are not the limits of cognition. We know more than we can tell.
7. Somatic experience is one of the most important indicators that someone has gotten it right.
8. Open-ended tasks permit the exercise of imagination, and the exercise of imagination is one of the most important of human aptitudes. It is imagination, not necessity, which is the mother of invention.



Although Eisner's (2009) points on "What Education Can Learn from the Arts" were specific to the re-conceptualization of education, these points directly connect back to Dewey's (1934) concept of educative experiences and the fact that the arts engage individuals in powerful meaning making (Greene, 1978, 1995) that is both personal and contextual (Eisner, 2002).

### **The Benefits of Arts Education: With a Focus on Visual Arts**

Winner and Hetland (2008) released an article in the *Boston Globe* that presented a case for valuing visual arts education for the intrinsic nature of what art does. The researchers noted that "the arts teach vital modes of seeing, imagining, inventing, and thinking" (p. 31). Basically, arts education focused on a set of thinking skills that are germane to the creative process of the arts, such as visual-spatial abilities, reflection, self-criticism, and the willingness to experiment and learn from mistakes (p. 29). Further research conducted by Hetland et al. (2013) discovered the specific benefits of a visual arts education and established a framework known as *Studio Thinking*.

The Studio Thinking framework organized the learning experiences found within a visual arts studio classroom and identified the consequential Eight Studio Habits of Mind (Table 3). The Eight Studio Habits of Mind are cognitive dispositions that were important in and of themselves and equal to the thinking capacities valued in traditional academic domains of education, like language arts, mathematics, and science (Hetland & Winner, 2001).

Table 3. Eight Studio Habits of Mind

Habits of Mind	Description
<b>Develop Craft</b>	<i>Technique</i> : Learning to use tools and learning artistic conventions; <i>Studio Practice</i> : Learning to care for tools, materials and space.
<b>Engage and Persist</b>	Learning to embrace problems of relevance within the art world and/or of personal importance to develop focus and other mental states conducive to working and persevering at art tasks.
<b>Envision</b>	Learning to picture mentally what cannot be directly observed and imagine possible next steps in making a piece.
<b>Express</b>	Learning to create works that convey an idea, feeling or a personal meaning.
<b>Observe</b>	Learning to attend to visual contexts more closely than ordinary “looking” requires; seeing things that otherwise might not be seen.
<b>Reflect</b>	<i>Question and Explain</i> : Learning to think and talk with others about an aspect of one’s work or working process; <i>Evaluate</i> : Learning to judge one’s own work and working process and the work of others in relation to standards of the field.
<b>Stretch and Explore</b>	Learning to reach beyond one’s capacities, to explore playfully without a preconceived plan, and to embrace the opportunity to learn from mistakes and accidents.
<b>Understand Art Worlds</b>	<i>Domain</i> : Learning about art history and current practice; <i>Communities</i> : Learning to interact as an artist with other artists (i.e. in classrooms, in local arts organizations, and across the art field) and within the broader society.

Subsequently, Ralph Smith (2006) maintained that the arts are equal to their academic counterparts and were important ways of knowing and learning:

Art deserves study as a subject in its own right, as a domain that is characterized by distinctive purposes, concepts, and skills. I emphasize that art, one of the supreme achievements of human kind, an achievement whose power for affecting thought and action has been remarked since antiquity and whose potency is

especially attested by totalitarian societies in their determination to control it, demands its own curricular time and space. (p. 101)

It was important to note that the Eight Studio Habits of Mind are nonhierarchical and non-sequential. Thus, none of the habits were more important than the other and each could be explored in any order, individually, or collectively. Hetland et al. (2013) acknowledged that although these habits of mind are intrinsic to the visual arts, they were also important to other arts disciplines, like dance, music, and drama, and there was the potential for correlational effects of transfer from arts to other academic subjects.

The corollary effects of the arts to support learning was the basis for the extrinsic argument for arts and learning, which was extrapolated and further examined in the next section. The next section specifically focused on the instrumental nature and efficacy for cognitive transfer through the use of arts integration.

### **Arts Integration**

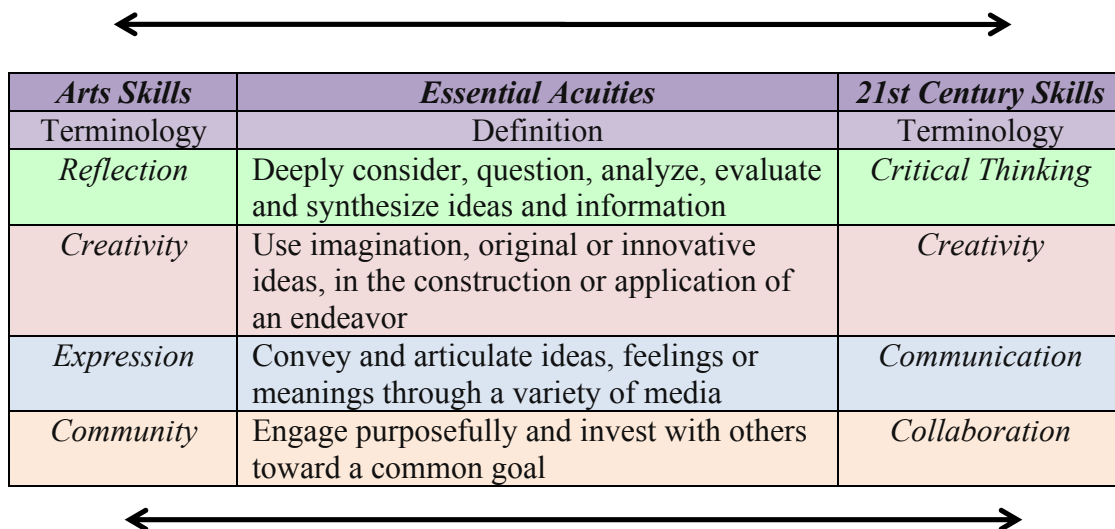
The conception of arts integration fortified the arts (Rabkin, 2012) and introduced a cross-disciplinary arts-based inquiry that had systemic implications for integrated thinking in education (Marshall, 2005, 2016). Marshall's (2005) work further expanded the notion of arts integration to that of *substantive integration*. "Rather than understanding integration as simply using art to explore and communicate ideas from other disciplines, these works suggest that integration is actually a form of cross-disciplinary collage – a juxtaposition of disciplinary elements that reveals or generates connective ideas" (p. 240). Substantive integration was derived from the theories of constructivism, which relied on the efficacy of transfer to expand connections and make

meaning. Marshall (2016) contended that cross-disciplinary arts-based inquiry embodied the intrinsic creativity of the arts and encouraged integrated thinking, which was innovative and opened a myriad of creative possibilities for systemic use. “To do this, [one] engages in a distinctive kind of thought that mingles analytical, logical, and linear reasoning with nonlinear and associative thinking” (p. 17). This required individuals to “employ invention to go beyond the known to see knowledge differently and create something new” (p. 17). Marshall’s conception of substantive integration was parallel to Roger Martin’s (2009) construct of integrative thinking (2016). Both Marshall and Martin contended that engaging in cognitive processes, such as integrated thinking, had broader implications for education and/or organizations by fostering creative problem solving to resolve systemic problems. The arts’ propensity for cognitive transfer was invaluable and Rabkin and Redmond (2004) further believed, “arts integration [is] educationally powerful because [it is] grounded in deep connections between the arts and cognition, and between learning, social, and emotional development” (p. 152).

### Essential Acuties: Connecting The Arts and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

In addition to the two primary arguments presented earlier, the intrinsic value of the arts (Hetland et al., 2013; Stevenson & Deasy, 2005) and the interdisciplinary nature of the arts (Diaz & McKenna, 2017; Marshall, 2016), a third argument was emerging to support the advancement of arts education in the twenty-first century. I argued that 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills (Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, 2007) were the same tenets essential to the Arts. Figure 1 presents a table that illustrated the interface of the skills between the Arts and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning. The illustration in Figure 1 established a correlation to suggest that there was a congruent alignment between the Arts Skills and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. The term I adopted to describe this correlation was *Essential Acuties*, (Strickland, 2017) because it represented an individual's strong perceptiveness for both intellectual and sensory efficacy.

Figure 1. The Essential Acuties of the Arts & 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills



<i>Arts Skills</i>	<i>Essential Acuties</i>	<i>21st Century Skills</i>
Terminology	Definition	Terminology
<i>Reflection</i>	Deeply consider, question, analyze, evaluate and synthesize ideas and information	<i>Critical Thinking</i>
<i>Creativity</i>	Use imagination, original or innovative ideas, in the construction or application of an endeavor	<i>Creativity</i>
<i>Expression</i>	Convey and articulate ideas, feelings or meanings through a variety of media	<i>Communication</i>
<i>Community</i>	Engage purposefully and invest with others toward a common goal	<i>Collaboration</i>

The Essential Acuties have always been inherent and integral qualities for the art forms of dance, music, drama, and visual arts. When utilized formally within educational

contexts, these qualities became processes that enhanced the learning and meaning-making experience for individuals. Subsequently, the concept of Essential Acuties illuminated three significant truths: (1) The enduring agency of the Arts inspires and accounts for the progression of civilizations. (2) Employing these desirable skills and capacities can result in personal transformation. (3) Supporting the advancement of visual arts education in the twenty-first century could inextricably cultivate the 4 C's which represent the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills.

### **Chapter Two Summary**

The literature reviewed provided an overview of a visual arts educator in regard to historical understandings of identity, dispositions, and teaching practices. The research indicated that not all visual arts educators were considered to be or claimed the identity of Artist Educator. If the fusion between an Artist Educators' studio practice and teaching pedagogy was considered a significant anomaly (Graham & Zwirn, 2010; Walker, 2013), then this created a problem of teacher quality that was germane to the twenty-first century (Foley, 2014; Pressfield, 2002; Robinson, 2015; Schleicher, 2012). The lack of fusion between artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy was a problem that needed to be addressed and an anomaly that required further exploration.

What the research did not explain was what the significance of the fusion between the artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy of Artist Educators was and why Artist Educators were committed to fusing these two elements. Understanding this fusion was at the heart of my inquiry and the impetus for questions like: what motivates and inspires Artist Educators to use simultaneously their artistic studio practice to influence their

teaching pedagogy and how does their teaching pedagogy influences their artistic studio practice? What are the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of the synergistic practices of Artist Educators? How did Artist Educators perceive the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy impacted their creative and classroom practices?

As an Artist Educator, I had my own opinions and beliefs on these topics. However, gaining a greater understanding of this phenomenon through a relational lens and acquiring perspective from additional voices within a culture-sharing group would greatly benefit this examination. It would extend the concept of identity from the personal sphere into a relational one, confirming the social constructive nature of the Artist Educator. More importantly, it would reveal the significance of fusing one's artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy and the inherent implications this had for an individual's teaching and learning practice, as well as the overall impact for a Visual Arts Education in the twenty-first century.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

**Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of certified K-12 visual arts educators who identified as Artist Educators, regarding the extent to which they saw themselves as both an artist and educator; further, the study examined how the perceived fusion of these two roles impacted their creative practice, as well as their teaching and learning practice. Essentially, the study sought to explore what motivated and drove the synergistic nature of an Artist Educator to fuse the creation and teaching of art into one creative, authentic practice and way of life. The following three interrelated research questions guided this autoethnographic study:

1. What motivates and inspires Artist Educators to use simultaneously their artistic studio practice to influence their teaching pedagogy, as well as use their teaching pedagogy to influence their artistic studio practice?
2. What are the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of the synergistic practices of Artist Educators?
3. How do Artist Educators perceive the fusion of their studio practice and teaching pedagogy to be impacting their creative and classroom practices?

In this chapter I discussed the research design and methodology used for this study. Additionally, I also offered a detailed description of the inquiry approach, ethical and bias concerns, sample selection, as well as an overview of my role as the researcher. Moreover, I identified and explained the process of participant recruitment, instrumentation development, as well as data collection and analysis.



### **Overview of Inquiry Approach and Research Design**

After careful consideration, I chose to use the qualitative research methodology known as *Autoethnography* to explore my inquiry (Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis, 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis, 2004). Autoethnography is a research method that integrates *autobiography* with *ethnography*, and oftentimes the arts, to portray simultaneously a creative process and product. According to Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011), autobiography is an author's attempt to "retroactively and selectively write about their past experiences" (p. 2) and ethnography is a researcher's study of a "culture's relational practices, values and beliefs, and shared experiences" (p. 3); therefore, "autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (p. 1). More specifically, the purpose of autoethnography was to examine an individual's cultural identity and analyze personal experience within the context of being "participant observers" (Adams et al., 2015; Ellis, 2004) that explore and describe the relational practices, common values, beliefs, and experiences for cultural understanding for both cultural insiders (those who are part of the culture) and cultural outsiders (those who are not part of the culture).

Successful autoethnographic researchers compared and contrasted their personal experience against cultural member experiences using one or more of the following strategies: investigate existing research, interview cultural members, and/or examine relevant cultural artifacts (Ellis et al., 2011), such as artistic expressions and creations (McNiff, 2013). Within the context of my study, I used a combination of

autoethnographic data in the form of a personal narrative, an interactive focus group interview, and artistic expressions to examine my inquiry. Autoethnography challenged the canonical ways of conducting social science research and transformed qualitative research into an inductive act that was creative, political, socially-just, and socially-conscious (Ellis et al., 2011). Subsequently, personal narrative became a creative source of empowerment and a form of resistance to canonical discourses (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

### **Role of the Researcher**

Within the context of this autoethnographic study I assumed the role of a *participant observer*. A participant observer was a more salient role where the autoethnographic researcher openly participated in the inquiry activities alongside the participants within their study (Creswell, 2013). Conducting research in this way, autoethnographers engaged in what Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) called, “the sensing of the universal in the particular” (p. 80). Essentially, this meant that autoethnographers embraced the assumption that the role of the researcher was to speak and write about personal experience as an act of speaking and writing about others and their cultural experience (Adams, 2008; Adams et al., 2015). In this manner, according to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davies (1997), autoethnographic researchers do the following:

... push against the constraints of traditions and practices of qualitative research to combine empirical and aesthetic descriptions, in its focus on the convergence of narrative and analysis, in its goal of speaking to broader audiences beyond the academy (thus linking inquiry to public discourse and

social transformation), in its standard of authenticity rather than reliability and validity (the traditional standards of quantitative and qualitative inquiry), and in its explicit recognition of the use of the self as the primary research instrument for documenting and interpreting the perspectives and experiences of the people and cultures being studied. (p. 14)

Within the context of this autoethnographic research inquiry, I framed specific themes based on the guiding research questions with my own voice and personal experiences. I intentionally used the knowledge and wisdom of my experiences as a resource for understanding and as a source for connection and identification with the focus group participants in my study, as well as any readers (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997). I then proceeded to integrate the experiences and voices of the participants into a narrative creating a layered account of the Artist Educator experience. My own responses are italicized to distinguish my voice from the voices of the participants of the focus group. I was directly involved as a participant observer and worked with a small focus group composed of five participants who were certified K-12 Visual Arts Educators in the states of Maine and New Hampshire, and identified as Artist Educators.

### **Purposeful Selection and Participant Recruitment**

The decisions of where to conduct research and whom to include, also known as *sampling*, was a significant part of any research design (Maxwell, 2013). There were two primary sampling methods to choose from when engaging quantitative research: *random sampling*, and *convenience sampling*. Random sampling was a form of probability

sampling, where “each member of the population has a known, nonzero probability of being chosen, allowing statistical generalization from the sample to the population of interest” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 96). Convenience sampling, also considered judgement sampling, was a “nonprobability sample in which respondents are chosen based on their convenience and availability” (Creswell, 2014, p. 158). Because I chose to conduct qualitative research instead of quantitative research, it made more sense to forgo the use of random or convenience sampling, and incorporate a sampling process that was more conducive for my research design, such as purposeful selection.

Purposeful selection, also known as *purposive sampling* was the deliberate selection of people, settings, and activities to provide relevant information for the research inquiry (Maxwell, 2013). Autoethnographic researchers understand that using purposeful selection for sampling was essential to inform the understanding of a research problem and sample size was key to collect extensive detail of the phenomena and data to analyze (Creswell, 2013). Using purposeful selection for participants was appropriate for my autoethnographic research for two reasons. First, as a participant observer, I engaged in exploratory and non-traditional methodological research that was “seeking to describe and systematically analyze personal experience to understand cultural experiences” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 1). Second, purposeful selection allowed me to employ productive relationships with participants (Maxwell, 2013) and served autoethnographic research similar to the way stratified sampling could be used for grounded theory research. “Like stratified sampling, the researcher first identifies the strata and their proportions as they are represented in the population. Then convenience or judgment sampling was used

to select the required number of subjects from each stratum” (Statpac, 2007-2009). All the participants chosen to be part of the focus group for my study met the following criteria: (a) certified visual arts educators in the states of Maine and/or New Hampshire, (b) engaged an artistic studio practice, and (c) had interpersonal relationships through professional networking and were members of the Kittery Art Association, a local artistic co-op organization.

### **Instrumentation**

Within the context of my study, I utilized five different instrumentations within five distinct phases to collect data. During the first phase of data collection, the instrument I used was autoethnographic data in the form of personal narrative derived from my own experiences responding to the three guiding research questions investigated in this study. The purpose of including personal narrative provided validity by allowing readers to witness and access first-hand experiences (Ellis et al., 2011). Personal narratives also challenged the “domination and authority of canonical stories” (Ellis, 2004, p. 121), which was a vital aspect of the autoethnography method (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016). The protocol used for the first phase can be found in Appendix C.

During the second phase, I contextualized my personal experiences with a small focus group. Dziak (2016) defined a focus group as “a small group of people that provide opinions and other information about a particular issue. The group was composed of people with some similar characteristics or interests so its members could serve as representative samples of a particular [culture].” The focus group in this study was

comprised of five individuals who were certified visual arts educators and identified as Artist Educators. The second instrument used for data collection and to engage the focus group was a traditional interactive interview protocol. The interactive interview served to give depth and breadth of both the personal, and in essence, the cultural experiences of Artist Educators. The focus group interactive interview protocol was designed to address the guiding research questions of this inquiry and can be found in Appendix D.

During phase three, the third instrument used for data collection and to engage the focus group was an arts-based approach which allowed inquiry through self-portraits. I intentionally used an arts-based approach for data collection because as McNiff (2013) eloquently noted, “Art is a way of knowing, problem-solving, healing, and transformation” (p. xiii) and was an “appropriate mode of addressing a problem or need, especially within professions based on art as a way of knowing” (p. xv). Given the context of this study and the emphasis on examining the identities of Artist Educators, it seemed fitting that the focus group engaged in artistic enquiry to render data in a way that honored an individual’s voice and provided an authentic means for meaning making and expression common for artists. As a result, the focus group created visual expressions in the form of self-portraits to explore their sense of self and purpose as an artist and educator. The protocol for this arts-based approach can be found in Appendix E.

The fourth phase of data collection involved engaging the focus group participants individually to analyze their self-portraits. After spending some time reviewing and reflecting on the artistic expressions created by the focus group participants, I arranged a meeting with each of the participants individually. During our

individual meetings, the fourth instrument used for data collection was an art analysis protocol (Appendix F).

The fifth and final phase of data collection involved an individual follow-up interview with each of the focus group participants. The fifth instrument was a follow-up interview protocol (Appendix E), based on the data collected during the interactive focus group interview from the first phase and an art analysis of their self-portrait from the third phase.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

In this study, both data collection and data analysis were independent and iterative processes that followed the same five phase schematic. The following section describes in detail the entire data collection process. Table 4 provides an illustrative overview of my data collection plan. The first phase explored autoethnographic data in the form of a reflective (thoughtful) and reflexive (creative and thematic) personal narrative. I responded to the guiding research questions of this study using narrative examples in the form of vignettes that reflect my experiences as an Artist Educator. Protocols were designed for the second, third, fourth and fifth phases of the data collection process. An interactive focus group interview served as a primary data source for the second phase. The third phase solicited additional data through the means of artistic expression and the creation of a self-portrait from each of the participants in the focus group. The fourth phase collected data through an analysis of each self-portrait, and the fifth phase collected data through an individual follow-up interview. The second, fourth, and fifth phases were

recorded and transcribed. Additionally, the artistic expressions from the third phase were digitally photographed and used as an artifact and evidence for analysis.

Table 4. Data Collection Plan

<b>Create and organize physical and digital files for collecting data.</b>		
<b>Data Collection</b>	<b>Procedures</b>	<b>Data Examples</b>
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autoethnographic Reflection</li> </ul>	Personal Experience Narrative (text)
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Group Interactive Interview</li> </ul>	Interview Notes and Audio Recording (Text and Waveform Audio [.wav] file)
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Group Arts-Based Activity</li> </ul>	Artistic Expressions (Self Portrait)
Phase 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Art Analysis</li> </ul>	Artistic Expressions (Digital Photographs of Self-Portrait)
Phase 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Follow-Up Interview</li> </ul>	Interview Notes and Audio Recording (Text and Waveform Audio [.wav] file)

**Phase 1: Instrumentation and procedure – autoethnographic data.** As a self-identified Artist Educator, I have been a practicing visual arts educator for sixteen years. When I enrolled in a graduate program to earn my Masters of Education degree, I was introduced to ethnography and once I began my doctoral program, I learned about autoethnography. The concept of autoethnography felt familiar and resonated with the



artist part of me. Thus, I believed conducting research and creating art are processes used for exploration and expression, and are considerably one in the same.

Within this study, autoethnographic data in the form of personal narrative was collected during the first phase. My observations of arts education culture, specifically Artist Educators, derived autoethnographically from the following data sets: personal experience, participation in the Kittery Art Association, and informal discourse with visual arts educators. I specifically framed the personal narrative using the three guiding questions for this research inquiry to create a layered account. A layered account was a narrative form of writing that represented experiences using “vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and introspection” (Ellis, 1991 as cited in Adams, 2008, p. 53) to connect with a reader. It was important to note that a layered account considered stories and personal narratives “as important as theories, personal experience as important as traditional academic research, and evocative, concrete texts as important as abstract analysis” (Ronai, 1995, 1996 as cited in Adams, 2008, p. 53).

**Phase 2: Instrumentation and procedure - interactive focus group interview protocol.** The second data collection instrument, an original Interactive Interview Focus Group Protocol, was designed (Appendix D). Unlike individual interviews, the focus group was a “collective on purpose” and allowed the participants to “interact and influence one another during the discussion and consideration of ideas and perspectives” (Devault, 2017). Engaging in a focus group to explore the personal reasons why the participating K-12 Visual Arts Educators identified as Artist Educators, as well as the fusion between their studio practice and teaching pedagogy provided a unique

opportunity to reflect and expand upon constructs of pedagogical practices, beliefs about arts education, and professional identity. The advantage of using a focus group interview allowed for the acquisition of deeply rich and diverse data, as evidenced in the transcripts from the personal discourse. Furthermore, the focus group protocol data collection instrument reflected the importance of contingency and verisimilitude for the reliability, generalizability, and validity of the research (Ellis et al., 2011) to illuminate and connect with both, cultural insiders and outsiders.

Six individuals received an email correspondence with a letter inviting them to participate in my research study. All six participants were very interested and willing to be a part of my study; however, due to a schedule conflict, only five individuals were able to participate. I used pseudonyms for each participant to protect their anonymity and privacy. All the participants in my study were members of the Kittery Art Association (KAA) and I met each of them through the Seacoast Moderns, a subgroup affiliation of the KAA organization. The Seacoast Moderns was a group of artists that would meet once a month at the KAA Gallery to commune, share and critique artwork, and plan annual art exhibitions at the KAA Gallery and other local venues.

*Jackson* was a white male in his late thirties. He had two college degrees, a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Art Education and held a K-12 Visual Arts Education certification for the state of Maine. He had been teaching art in public schools for 10 years and presently teaches at the high school level. He also had experience teaching art at the primary, elementary, and middle school levels. Jackson's artistic studio practice was eclectic, but his media preference was for mixed-media, ceramics, sculpture and

printmaking. Jackson's art would be characterized as conceptual and abstract. He exhibited his artwork at the Kittery Art Association, Kittery Community Center, York Library and the University of Maine.

*Georgia* was a white female in her late fifties. She had a Bachelor of Science degree and holds a K-12 Visual Arts Education certification for the state of Maine. She had been teaching art in public schools for 33 years and was preparing for retirement. She presently teaches at the high school level and had experience teaching at the primary, elementary and middle school levels, as well as Adult Education programs. Prior to teaching in Maine, Georgia was certified and taught public school visual arts in New Hampshire. Georgia was a painter and mixed-media artist. She primarily worked in acrylic, oil, and watercolor paints, as well as collage. She created both realistic and abstract expressions. Georgia exhibited her artwork at the Kittery Art Association, York Art Association, Newburyport Art Association and the R. Levy Lincoln Gallery. In addition to engaging in the KAA's Seacoast Moderns artist group, Georgia and I attend museums, get together for dinners and periodic art making sessions.

*Vanessa* was a white female in her early fifties and had a Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Arts in Teaching degrees. Vanessa had taught for 21 years and holds a certification in K-12 Visual Arts Education for the state of Maine. She presently teaches at the elementary level and had taught at the middle and high school levels, as well as Adult Education programs. Prior to teaching art in public schools in Maine, she had taught visual arts in private schools in Massachusetts. She had an eclectic artistic studio practice and created realistic and abstract expressions. Her artistic media preferences

were painting, metals and textile/fibers. She had published a book on cultivating creativity and had also been the proprietor of an art gallery in southern Maine. Vanessa had exhibited her artwork at the Kittery Art Association, as well as other local galleries including a Rhogue Gallery.

*Kay* was a white female in her early sixties and has a Bachelor of Arts degree and holds a K-12 Visual Arts Education certification for the state of Maine. Kay recently retired after 25 years of service in public schools. Kay worked in Special Education for 6 years as a paraprofessional and then 19 years teaching visual arts. Before retiring, she taught art at the high school level. She also had experience teaching at the primary, elementary and middle school levels. Working in the educational field was a second career for Kay. Prior to teaching art, Kay held a successful 14-year career as a freelance visual designer. Kay was a mixed-media artist and graphic designer. She enjoyed printmaking, drawing, ink, pastel, charcoal, acrylic and watercolor paints, found objects, and novelty papers. She created realistic and abstract expressions. Kay and I also attend museums and have occasional dinners together and engage in periodic art making sessions outside of the Seacoast Moderns and KAA. In addition to the Kittery Art Association, Kay had exhibited her artwork at a Rhogue Gallery, and other local restaurants, schools, libraries, as well as participated in national and international juried exhibitions and fairs.

*Lexi* was a white female in her early thirties and had a Bachelor of Arts in Education degree and was presently in graduate school for a Master of Art Education degree. Lexi had taught art in public schools for nine years and she currently teaches at

the high school level in Maine. She holds a K-12 Visual Arts Education certification in the state of Maine and a K-8 Visual Arts Education certification in Massachusetts. She had experience teaching art at the primary, elementary, and middle school levels in the state of Massachusetts. Lexi was a mixed media artist and photographer. She created realistic and abstract expressions and exhibited her work at the Kittery Art Association, York Art Association and a Rhogue Gallery.

The interactive focus group interview was held at the Kittery Art Association Gallery on Sunday, December 3, 2017. The focus group met for three hours before the gallery opened for public viewing and was guided by a series of questions which can be found in the focus group interview protocol (Appendix D).

**Phase 3: Instrumentation and procedure - artistic expression.** The third data collection instrument utilized arts-based research (McNiff, 2011, 2013), specifically an artistic method and protocol (Springgay et al., 2008) to engage the focus group participants in art-making activity as a means of exploring their sense of identity (Appendix E). The purpose of using arts-based research methods within this context is inspired by the “modes of investigation [as] determined by the nature of the issues being examined” (McNiff, 2011, p. 388). Since the focus group participants are artists and educators, using artistic expression for salient data collection and analysis is quite appropriate for “creating the circumstances to produce knowledge and understanding through inquiry” (Springgay et al., 2008, p. xxiv) because as Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) contended, “making and finding meaning through art is a transformative experience” (p. 35).

Using visual arts media provided by the researcher and the Artist Educators themselves, the participants created self-portraits to reflect their self-conception as Artist Educators. Due to some time constraints, the artwork was created in conjunction with the focus group interactive interview session on Sunday, December 3, 2017. Participants who completed their self-portraits during this session had their original artwork digitally photographed. A couple of the participants needed more time to work on their self-portraits. Participants who needed more time to finish their self-portraits were able to take their artistic expressions home and sent me a digital photograph of their finished pieces for me to review.

**Phases 4 & 5: Instrumentations and procedures – individual art analysis and follow-up interviews.** Upon the completion of phases two and three, I scheduled and conducted individual follow-up interview and art analysis meeting with each participant. I met with participants individually between December 6 – 12, 2017. The follow-up interview and art analysis meetings were conducted back-to-back at locations chosen by the participants and included places like their home, studio classroom or a café. All the participants had their original self-portrait artistic expressions completed and prepared for an analysis.

As I met individually with each of the participants we “[opened] up conversation” (Springgay et al., 2008, p. xxx) through a discussion and examination of their artwork, as guided by the art analysis prompt of the artistic expression protocol (Appendix G). The advantages of using arts-based research were prolific, as it helped to “illuminate, communicate and expand the overall knowledge base” (McNiff, 2013, p. 25). Using

artistic expressions as a data collection instrument ensured accountability to the integrity of both the autoethnographic approach (Bochner & Ellis, 2016) and arts-based research process (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997; McNiff, 2011, 2013; Springgay et al., 2008). In addition to the art analysis, I engaged each participant with a follow-up interview protocol.

After Phase 2, I formulated comments and questions based on information shared in the focus group interview and the self-portraits that were created. The follow-up interview protocol (Appendix F) included my responses to each of the self-portraits, discussion points that needed greater specification, and/or topics the Artist Educators did not bring up during our discussion in the focus group, however, based on my knowledge of them, I felt had impacted their identity and practices as Artist Educators and warranted some investigation. For example, during my follow-up meeting with Kay, I asked her to share information about her former career as a freelance visual designer, as well as her entrance into the educational field as a special education para-professional, before pursuing visual art education. I did this because I believed it would provide further insight for responding to some of the guiding research questions. Lastly, if needed, participants agreed to engage in additional individual follow-up sessions using another protocol (Appendix H).

### **Data Analysis Procedures and Data Representation**

The following section described the entire data analysis process in detail and visually with Table 5. Similar to the data collection procedures, the analysis of data was an iterative process.

Table 5. Data Analysis Plan

<b>An iterative process of coding and categorizing emergent themes and findings.</b>		
<b>Analysis Phases</b>	<b>Procedures</b>	<b>Data Examples</b>
Phase 1: Data Memoing & Data Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Coding / Descriptive Coding: Generate initial codes based on research questions.</li> </ul>	Personal Reflection: Personal Experience Narrative (Text)
Phase 2: Data Description & Data Classification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptive Coding / In Vivo Coding: Analyze data for topics, themes, and patterns</li> <li>• Re-sort and code data accordingly</li> </ul>	Focus Group: Interview Notes and Audio Recording (Text and Waveform Audio [.wav] file)
Phase 3: Data Description & Data Classification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptive Coding / Concept Coding: Analyze artwork imagery and semiotics for concepts and themes</li> <li>• Re-sort and code data accordingly</li> </ul>	Arts-Based Activity: Artistic Expression (Self Portrait)
Phase 4: Data Description & Data Classification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eclectic Coding (Descriptive Coding, In Vivo Coding / Concept Coding / Pattern Coding): Analyze data for concepts, themes, and patterns</li> <li>• Re-sort and code data accordingly</li> </ul>	Individual Art Analysis: Artistic Expressions (Digital Photographs of Self-Portrait)
Phase 5: Data Description & Data Classification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eclectic Coding (Descriptive Coding, In Vivo Coding / Concept Coding / Pattern Coding): Analyze data for concepts, themes, and patterns</li> <li>• Re-sort and code data accordingly</li> </ul>	Follow-Up Interviews: Interview Notes and Audio Recording (Text and Waveform Audio [.wav] file)
Data Interpretation & Data Rendering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret and contextualize data</li> <li>• Create a layered account narrative</li> </ul>	Member Checking: Artist Educator Layered Account Narrative



I began with data memoing and created initial codes for the guiding research questions. Once the data collection began within each phase, I engaged procedures for coding emerging topics, concepts and themes, such as Descriptive Coding and In Vivo Coding (Saldaña, 2016). Upon the conclusion of each protocol, I uploaded the digital recordings and created transcripts using NVIVO™ software. I reviewed all the recordings, transcripts and photographic images of the self-portraits and proceeded to classify, re-sort and code data accordingly and then interpreted the findings. The interpretation led to a rich description and layered account narrative that was contextualized in relation to the concepts found within the literature review of this dissertation.

*Phase 1: Autoethnographic data analysis.* After reflecting upon the three guiding research questions and writing my personal experience narrative responses, I read the narrative responses several times to generate initial codes that connected to each of the three guiding research questions of this study. In addition to initial coding, I also used *Descriptive Coding* to identify relevant topics within the narrative. Descriptive Coding was a coding technique that “assigns labels to data to summarize the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data and provides an inventory of topics for indexing and categorizing” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 292). The personal experience narrative derived from autoethnographic data became part of the layered account to represent emergent themes within the research. My personal experience narrative appeared in italics and introduced the data analysis responses for each of the three guiding research questions in Chapter 4: Findings and Results.

*Phase 2: Interactive focus group interview analysis.* I used both handwritten

notes and a Dictopro™ audio digital recording device to document the discourse of the focus group. Handwritten notes were later typed into Microsoft Word™ documents and I transcribed all of the audio recordings for a more careful review and analysis of the data collected using NVIVO™ software. The data collected from the focus group interviews was then reviewed and analyzed using both Descriptive Coding and *In Vivo Coding* methods with the NVIVO™ software. In Vivo Coding was a data record coding technique that “uses words or short phrases from the participant’s own language” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 294) in effort to specify and honor the voices of the participants. Both of these strategies helped me thoroughly examine the perspectives, experiences and language used by the participants during the interview session.

***Phase 3: Artistic expression analysis.*** Given that the participants identified as artists, engaging art and artistic expression as a vehicle for research was quite appropriate. Within the context of this study, “the empirical use of artistic [expression] was the primary mode for both the process of enquiry and the communication of outcomes” (McNiff, 2013, p. 4). Each of the participants, including the researcher, created an artistic expression in the form of a portrait, which is an artistic representation of a person. There were multiple purposes for having the participants specifically create their own self-portraits. First, because the participants where engaged in inquiry about identity and reflected upon themselves, a self-portrait was an authentic means to artistically represent oneself. Second, according to Lightfoot-Lawrence (1997) a portrait: creates a narrative that is at once complex, provocative and inviting, that attempts to be holistic, revealing the dynamic interaction of values, personality, structure,

and history... producing complex, subtle description in context... [and]  
developing a convincing and authentic [personal] narrative. (pp. 11-12)

Lastly, McNiff (2013) noted the relevance and power of the arts is “expanding the process of knowing, communicating, and transforming life situations through artistic expression and understanding” (p. 5). Thus, artistic expression and arts-based research created a utilitarian efficacy that was viable and equal to traditional scientific methodologies for research.

Within the context of my study, the self-portraits were significant examples of empirical and aesthetic data that focused “on the convergence of narrative and analysis” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 14) which served to universally connect with audiences beyond the culture sharing group and academia. Using my knowledge and experience of art analysis, I observed and evaluated the self-portraits for salient themes and concepts that emerged from the aesthetic and visual elements within the artistic expressions. I then used both Descriptive Coding and *Concept Coding* to document and separate the concepts and themes I observed within each of the self-portraits. Concept Coding “assigns meaning to data or data analytic work in progress” and symbolically represents an idea with broader meaning (Saldaña, 2016, p. 292). Digital images of each completed self-portrait were obtained (Appendix H).

**Phases 4 and 5: Individual art analysis and follow-up interviews.** Similar to the analysis procedures for the interactive focus group interview in the second phase, I used the Dictopro™ audio digital recording device to document the discourse between each participant and myself, as well as handwritten notes for anecdotal data. All audio

recordings were transcribed within one to two days from its occurrence using the NVIVO™ software. During the fourth phase, I engaged participants individually in a verbal analysis of their artwork. Analysis of the participant's self-portrait served to gain a deeper understanding of their identity and self-conception as an Artist Educator. The analysis of the self-portrait artistic expression was guided by a protocol (Appendix G).

During the fifth phase, I engaged participants individually in a follow-up interview guided by a protocol (Appendix F). The individual follow-up interview served to clarify points that were made during the focus group interview of the second phase, as well as questions I had regarding the self-portraits that were created.

Upon reviewing the data collected from the art analysis and follow-up interview of the fourth phase, I engaged in *Eclectic Coding*, a method integrating a variety of coding processes, like Descriptive Coding, In Vivo Coding, and Concept Coding. In addition to these previously used coding methods, I also used *Pattern Coding*. Pattern Coding is a process for second cycle coding that used a category label to identify similarly coded data and organized the “development of major themes from the data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 296). Within this analysis phase I specifically looked for emergent themes and found relevant quotes that captured the participants' perceptions regarding topics like identity and the significance of the fusion of artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy. I then compared the information acquired from each of the participants addressing the research questions and aligned their quotes and statements with the research focus. These emergent themes were coded and categorized in relation to each of the guiding research questions using the NVIVO™ software. As a result, I

organized the responses according to the three guiding research questions described earlier in the chapter. The themes were turned into statements and incorporated into a layered account narrative that would encapsulate the overall experiences of the participants and helped to present a generalized understanding of the identity and practices of an Artist Educator. Furthermore, the analysis process drew attention to additional questions suitable for future research.

### **Qualitative Validity**

Through the use of vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and introspection, I essentially created a collective portrait of Artist Educators that reflected both their common and diverse experiences. After all the data was collected and analyzed, I used *member checking* to ensure qualitative validity. Member checking was a strategy and process used “to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201) and was achieved through “soliciting feedback about the data and conclusions from the people [studied]” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 126). This strategy was especially important to consider when utilizing the qualitative research methodology, autoethnography, because of the intimate nature and interpersonal relationships between the researcher and the participants involved in the study (Ellis, 2007; Ellis et al., 2011).

Within the context of this study, this process involved bringing the research back to the focus group participants for some reflexive discourse. To do this, I first emailed the participants an initial copy of my Chapter Four: Analysis and Findings for their review. After the participants had a chance to review the findings, we scheduled a final meeting as a focus group to discuss and receive consent for their representation in the narrative.

Engaging in member checking ensured my accountability to the participants, their experiences, and forms of expression that resulted in the overall “description, analysis, and interpretation of the culture sharing group” (Creswell, 2013, p. 197).

### **Ethical and Bias Concerns**

As in all qualitative studies, there were potential ethical and bias concerns (Ellis et al., 2011). With respect to autoethnography, relational ethics was complex. Ellis (2007) asserted, “relational ethics recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work” (p. 4). Relational ethics was an important consideration because it ascertained that autoethnographers reflect upon the inherent implications within their work and “act in a humane, nonexploitative way, while being mindful of [their] role as researchers” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 264 as cited in Ellis, 2007, p. 5).

Autoethnographers must also contend with the perceptions and effects of using potentially biased data in their research. Given the subjective nature of personal narrative and creative expression, it was inevitable that issues of bias were prevalent (Ellis et al., 2011). The way to mitigate the accusation of bias was to directly confront and substantiate the biasing of data with personal experiences, intentionally showing that there was something to be gained by “saturating observations with your own subjectivity” (Ellis, 2004, p. 89). Although navigating these ethical and bias issues was challenging, it was not impossible or arbitrary. Holman Jones (as cited in Ellis et al., 2011) claimed “The goal [of autoethnography] is to produce analytical, accessible texts that change us

and the world in which we live for the better,” making autoethnography an ideal methodology for engaging and honoring the diverse dialectics of human experience and creativity.

Within the context of this study, some of the ways I addressed ethical and bias concerns included the following: (a) identifying and acknowledging my own thoughts, feelings, and experiences; (b) soliciting participants who are not my co-workers and are outside of my work organization; (c) acknowledging any interpersonal connections I have with the participants; and (d) taking responsibility for the process, including the privacy and safety of the participants, as well as the integrity of the overall research inquiry (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis, 2007).

**Confidentiality and anonymity.** Confidentiality, the rights to privacy, as well as the care and safety of participants in qualitative research, especially autoethnography, are of the utmost importance (Ellis, 2007). Within the context of my research, after informing and receiving expressed and written consent from the participants (Creswell, 2013), all notes were kept safe in a non-accessible password protected computer. With respect to confidentiality and participant responses within the narrative, I used pseudonyms for each participant to protect their anonymity and privacy. Lastly, the participants were reminded that all the research notes and materials would be destroyed, (with the exception of the original artwork) within five years of completing my dissertation.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

In this autoethnographic study, I engaged as a participant observer with a small and defined focus group of visual arts educators who also identified as Artist Educators,

were certified visual arts educators respectively, and were from the seacoast areas of New Hampshire and Maine. All participants were employed or recently retired visual arts educators who worked or have worked in public schools in Maine or New Hampshire. Individuals who did not identify as Artist Educators and were not certified visual arts educators in either New Hampshire or Maine were not included in this study. The data collected addressed an individual's perception of the fusion between their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy and its impact on their professional growth and efficacy.

### **Limitations of the Study**

A methodological limitation in this study was the self-reported data in the form of autoethnographic reflective narrative. Self-reported data presented a limitation as personal voice was difficult to cross-check, because "self-reported data is limited by the fact that it rarely can be independently verified" ("Descriptions of Possible Limitations," 2018, para 3).

### **Chapter Three Summary**

Chapter Three explained the research design and methodology, the role of the researcher, bias and ethical concerns, as well as a rationale for an autoethnographic study. Autoethnography was an approach to research and writing that examined an individual's experiences through the analysis and contextualization of both personal and others cultural experiences (Adams et al., 2015).

Included in this chapter was the sampling and participant recruitment process, instrumentation, and the methods used for data collection, analysis and representation.



Participants were selected based on interpersonal relationships to the researcher, (affiliated with the KAA), met basic criteria, (engaged an artistic studio practice; combined artistic studio practices and teaching pedagogy), and were certified visual arts educators from southern Maine and/or New Hampshire. As mentioned in chapter one, the purposive sampling of this study was estimated, based on feedback from the focus group participants, to represent 55% of all the current practicing visual arts educators across the United States that are state certified and/or licensed teachers that engaged an artistic studio practice and would identify as Artist Educators. Instrumentation was developed using both traditional qualitative methods, such as interview protocols, as well as complementary arts-based methods for multifaceted and rich data acquisition. Data collection was accomplished in five phases. The first phase entailed autoethnographic data in the form of a personal reflection and narrative. The second phase involved a focus group engaging in an interactive interview. The third phase involved the same focus group engaging in an arts-based activity, where participants created artistic expressions based on a prompt and protocol. Both the second and third phase of data collection was conducted at the Kittery Art Association Gallery. The fourth and fifth phases concluded with both individual follow-up interviews and artwork analysis at participant homes, studio classrooms and local cafes. Furthermore, researcher's role accounted for and clarified bias and ethical concerns, qualitative validity, as well as delimitations associated with autoethnographic research studies.

A detailed description of the analysis procedures used for this autoethnographic research study was also presented. The analysis plan paralleled the data collection plan

and entailed five phases. Analysis consisted of an iterative process of listening, transcribing, reviewing and coding data. Handwritten notes and audio recordings of the interactive focus group interview, individual art analysis, and follow-up interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word™ and/or uploaded into the qualitative analysis software, NVIVO™, for coding and organizing. In addition to handwritten notes and audio recordings, digital photographs were taken of the artworks (self-portraits) created by the participants for further examination and analysis. All the data was collected and analyzed by the researcher alone to interpret and provide answers (findings) for the three guiding research questions of this study. These findings are presented in Chapter Four: Analysis and Findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### **Introduction**

This study examined the perceptions of certified K-12 visual arts educators, who identified as Artist Educators, and sought to explore what motivated and drove the synergistic nature of an Artist Educator to fuse the creation and teaching of art into one creative, authentic practice and way of life. The findings of this research should be useful for arts educators and universities that seek the development of teachers who teach arts education, especially visual arts education. The key findings also helped to demystify the stereotype coined by George Bernard Shaw, “Those who can, do; and those who cannot, teach” (as cited in Daichendt, 2010, p. 9).

Autoethnographical research methods guided the design and process of this study. Chapter Three explained the methods and process used to engage this research study and answer the three guiding research questions. NVIVO™ software was used as a management tool that enabled the researcher to organize and analyze the qualitative data collected in this study.

The participants created self-portraits that represented their sense of identity as an Artist Educator. Artifacts gathered were in the form of photographic images of the original artworks created by the participants. The artifacts highlighted recurring themes and reinforced the data collected during the focus group and individual follow-up interviews, as well as artwork analysis.

This chapter presented the research data and findings to address each of the three guiding research questions. The three interrelated guiding research questions that guided the study are as follows:

1. What motivates and inspires Artist Educators to use simultaneously their artistic studio practice to influence their teaching pedagogy, as well as use their teaching pedagogy to influence their artistic studio practice?
2. What are the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of the synergistic practices of Artist Educators?
3. How do Artist Educators perceive the fusion of their studio practice and teaching pedagogy to be impacting their creative and classroom practices?

The three interrelated guiding research questions form a framework for organizing the reporting of the data. The data for each question was presented within the context of that question and I used different points of view in my writing. Autoethnographic data introduced and contextualized each of the questions. I used italics to tell my story of identity and experience as an Artist Educator in first-person point of view. I organized my story themes around the observations from my research and distinguished personal narrative from the narratives of others by the use of asterisks. I used the combined data from the self-portraits, the focus group interviews and individual follow-up interviews through third person point of view to describe the experiences of others in a culture sharing group (Adams, 2008; Ellis et al., 2011; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997) who also identified as Artist Educators.

The data collected and analyzed rendered seven key findings that provided insight into the experiences of being an Artist Educator, the significance of their choices, and the impact they perceived the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy

had on their own creative and classroom practices. Furthermore, identifying the supports and inhibitors of Artist Educators helped to understand better the conditions necessary for the effective practice of Artist Educators. The chapter concluded with a summary of the key findings from this study.

**Research Question One: What motivates and inspires Artist Educators to use simultaneously their artistic studio practice to influence their teaching pedagogy, as well as use their teaching pedagogy to influence their artistic studio practice?**

### **Autoethnographic Reflection**

*When I thought about what motivated and inspired me to use my artistic studio practice to influence my teaching pedagogy, as well as use my teaching pedagogy to influence my artistic studio practice, the answer seemed simple, yet it was complex. Essentially, I desired to live a creative life. For me, the creative life symbolized the union of education and the transformative power of Art. This meant that as an Artist Educator, I fused my practices of art making and teaching together because it allowed for a deeper experience for personal and communal discovery, expansion, and transformation to occur.*

*Parker Palmer (1993) equated education to a spiritual journey of personally seeking and communally sharing of truth. Therefore,*

Truth – wherever it may be found and in whatever form – is personal, to be known in personal relationships. The search for the word of truth becomes the quest for community with each other and all creation. The speaking of that word becomes the living of our lives. (p.49)

*As I engaged in the creation of art and self-expression, I was constantly discovering and rediscovering my truth and myself. As I engaged in teaching, I was cultivating relationships for communing wisdom and creating space for critical dialogue to allow all engaged in the conversation to share their truth, to be and become their true selves. For me, living a creative life is synonymous with a spiritual life. Julia Cameron (2009, p. 45) noted, “One of the most attractive elements of a spiritual life is the capacity to bear witness.” This assertion is especially validated for educators by the following claim made by Palmer (1993):*

Reality is communal, we would learn best by interacting with it. In the practical disciplines, this may mean working with materials, creating artifacts, and solving problems. In the more abstract disciplines, it may mean learning how scholars generate, criticize, and use the concepts and data of their fields. In a wide variety of ways, good teachers bring students into living communion with the subjects they teach and into community with themselves and with each other. (p.xvii)

*As an Artist Educator, I am constantly being witnessed by and bearing witness to others’ life’s experiences through the practices of creating art and teaching about and through the arts. I think of life as the ultimate educational journey and I, along with my students, are voyagers exploring the landscapes of our inner and outer lives together, bearing witness to our experiences through the creation of art and expressing our truths. Through this process and interaction, we grow and transform as our understanding of self, others and our world expands. I discovered soul purpose and meaning through the*

*processes of creating art and expressing my experiences of life while working with individuals and teaching them to think and engage with the world creatively, like I do.*

\*\*\*\*\*

The Artist Educators in this research study were asked to reflect upon their identity and describe why they believed fusing their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy together was significant for their practice and lives. The Artist Educators responded through the creation of a self-portrait, which I analyzed twice. I conducted an independent analysis of the self-portraits first and then I met with each of the participants individually and we analyzed the self-portraits together.

### **Self-Portrait Results**

The artistic expression and art analysis phases of this inquiry involved the original focus group, which was voluntarily comprised of five participants and the researcher. The focus group engaged in an arts-based research method (McNiff, 2013; Springgay et al., 2008) and created original self-portraits (Appendix I). In this section, I discussed the emergent themes resulting from my analysis of the participant artwork from phase three of both data collection and analysis. I also detailed the responses that were provided by the participants during our individual art analysis during the fourth phase of both data collection and analysis. The results of the self-portraits metaphorically reflect the concept of the Artist Educator identity, based on the perceptions and values held by each of the participants.

**Art Analysis: Emergent Themes**

The self-portraits created by the participants were significant examples of empirical and aesthetic data and were analyzed for salient themes and concepts that emerged from the aesthetic and visual elements within the artistic expressions. During phase three of data analysis, using my knowledge of art analysis, I evaluated the self-portraits for themes, commonalities, and symbols that would be considered indicative of an Artist Educator. The visual elements of art examined include line, shape, space, color, form, value, and texture. The following elements were commonly used to represent metaphorical themes within each of the artworks: line, shape, form, color, and value.

The use of line - especially erratic, wavy, scribbled lines - were used to convey energy, especially a sense of what participants referred to as “creative energy.” Circular shapes and spherical forms were used to establish an individual’s sense of centeredness, authentic core, as well as emanating ideas and thoughts with others. Colors were used to symbolically represent concepts like green for growth, white for personal integrity and authenticity and various reds for passion and heart. The use of value generally reflected the ideas of dichotomy and paradox. For example, lightness and darkness was a necessity to describe awareness and wholeness. Each of the self-portrait compositions uniquely organized the visual elements integrating traditional principles of design, such as balance, repetition, emphasis, harmony and unity. However, the most universal and compelling principle of design recognized within each artistic expression was rhythm and movement. Each self-portrait used rhythm and movement to consciously convey a sense of mental and emotional processing and physical action, such as thinking, exploring, creating, and



expressing, which the participants concurred are evocative to artists, as well as teaching and learning.

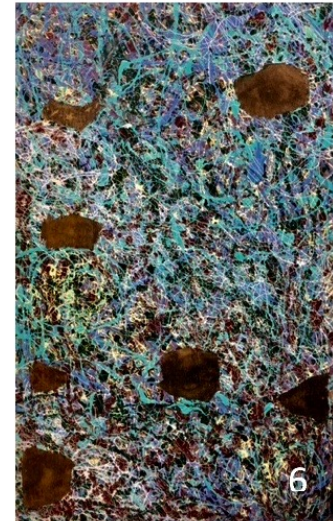
In addition to the specific visual elements of art and principles of design, there were universal symbols visible within the self-portraits individually and collectively. Nature was a primary form of inspiration and symbolically used throughout each of the self-portraits. Organic objects like human body parts, seeds and plants, as well as natural elements such as water, fire, and soil were observable within the self-portraits. These symbols were used to represent a fundamental connection to life and universal existence, based on the ideas expressed during the focus group interview.

My initial interpretation of the artworks was corroborated by each of the participants when I individually met with them to analyze their self-portraits.

### **Art Analysis: Participant Responses**

When analyzing the artwork during phase four of data analysis, I engaged the participants in a dialogue using visual thinking strategies and three specific questions espoused by Philip Yenawine (2013): (a) What's going on in this image? (b) What do you see that makes you say that? and (c) What more can we find to support our ideas? These three questions were used to analyze the visual elements found within the self-portraits. Figure 2 displayed all the self-portraits created by the focus group. A larger and detailed photographic image of each of the self-portraits referred to in this section can be observed in Appendix I.

Figure 2: Focus Group Self-Portraits



The following participant responses helped to illuminate the imagery created and described one's identity as an Artist Educator. The participants' original artwork and analysis responses not only revealed how each individual saw themselves, but it also alluded to the motivations for claiming the identity of Artist Educators. The participant

responses were arranged according to the order in which I met with each participant individually to analyze their self-portrait.

**Christopher (1).** *My self-portrait was abstract and conceptual in nature. I engaged mixed-media materials, such as pencil, paint brush, SHARPIE and oil pastels, to express my intentions. I used a dry brush technique to blend and mix the colors of the oil pastels. I layered multiple colors, various types of lines and marks upon one another to create a veil-like effect to represent both the nebulous and transparent process of creative thinking and creative energy.*

*When I first thought about a self-portrait, the image of an antique silhouette portrait came to mind. I created this silhouetted head to represent the mind of my students. Inside the silhouetted head is a human-like figure that is illuminated and emanating inspiration, care and creative energy. This figure is symbolic of me and how I envision my students witness my modeling of living an authentically creative life, which inspires me to be an Artist Educator.*

*I used traditional rainbow colors, (red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet) in the background to represent diversity and awareness. Black was used to silhouette and generalize the head and minds of the students I engage. White was used to represent truth, authenticity, and the essence of knowing through the senses. Red and pink was used in the center to convey heart and passion. The red, orange, blue, purple, gray and white scribble lines represent creative thought, reflectivity, as well as essential connections and meaning making. These colorful and stimulating lines are derived from the experience of*

*teaching and learning, as well as engaging aesthetic experiences and making artistic expressions.*

**Kay (2).** The self-portrait that Kay created was inspired by an assignment that she used to give her students entitled, “Analogue Portrait.” The image of the analogue portrait was not realistic and as Kay noted, “it uses symbolic representation to reveal your essence.” Kay expressed that her self-portrait as an Artist Educator was about “influence; this is what I have and what I can offer. It’s about witnessing and modeling, how we do it (being an artist) and why we do it (teach).”

Looking at the image Kay created, one would see a “tear drop” looking shape with “fiddle-head” type lines emerging from the top that encapsulate what Kay described as “the creative life force.” Green was used to symbolize growth and life. The other colors included blue and yellow-orange. These colors were subtle hues with a muted quality. “Blue is the color I see and use to describe myself as me. It’s my essence, authenticity, integrity and heart.” Yellow-orange complements the blue and represented the complexity and tension that lives within in all beings. As Kay noted, “We are not just made up of one mind, there is a lot that goes into us and it can be different, but can still live together within.” The many and varied sizes of black, squiggle lines represented an active mind that is stimulated by creativity and the energy of others. The black squiggle lines of energy were symbolic of so many different creative ideas.

In contrast, the gray, static and relatively straight lines were representational of people in the world and civilization. Kay stated, “My mind is always moving and thinking about how creative ideas and energy impact the world.” When the altered lines,

representing the reverberation of creative energy from the tear drop, come into contact with the static lines there is a definite impact. Kay said the altered lines were like “wavelengths or waves that I can send out to the world and reflect how I alter and contribute to reducing the static lines around.” Kay further explained that, “When you walk into a room or space, who you are contributes to and changes that space. I believe that if we interact long enough, we can affect some change and maybe make some things better. I think I have creative things to contribute to the world and I am hoping that some of what I have to offer can affect the world outside, beyond the school walls.”

**Georgia (3).** The self-portrait that Georgia created was both metaphorical and conceptual. Georgia said the imagery was intended to convey messages about her spiritual and life experiences of “creating and being and thinking.” Georgia drew upon images of nature, especially water symbols, as metaphors to describe herself and revealed that as an Artist Educator there is “no division or split between art and teaching.” Georgia’s use of colors drew upon what she stated as traditional psychological meaning. The orange and reds represented the fire and passion that undergirds the Artist Educator. Green represented nurture and growth from the process of teaching and learning. The fuchsia and pinks were her favorite colors and reflected Georgia’s warm, deep, dignified, solemn, and caring heart.

The first nature symbol Georgia used was a lotus blossom. “A lotus mirrors my personality and duality as an introvert and extravert and a learner and a teacher.” There were two profile faces that represented both aspects of Georgia as the artist and teacher.

As an Artist Educator, Georgia saw herself as “a keeper of the creative secrets” from the knowledge she has acquired from life experiences. Georgia believed sharing these creative secrets and knowledge with others and in turn being taught by others made life a constant learning process. The concept of engaging creativity was represented through the green tentacles or vines that reach, embrace, and transmit to the circles or “others.” The circles that the tentacles were “catching to bring into the fold” represented a myriad of ideas, students, and connections that were made in her studio classroom.

**Vanessa (4).** Vanessa’s self-portrait used mixed-media and three-dimensionality to create an abstract representation of herself as an Artist Educator. The compositional paper chosen was created through a printmaking process. The paper was sprayed with mineral water and then organic matter, such as leaves and plants, were dipped in copper or iron solutions and pressed into the paper by rolling the paper and boiling it for two hours. As a result, color was absorbed from the organic matter and melded or imprinted on the paper. This experience was a new artistic process for Vanessa and she said that “nature is rejuvenating and a muse for her creativity.”

The compositional paper was layered with pieces of blank paper that were bound like a book with a needle and thread. Red ribbon was weaved throughout the compositional space, as well as linear marks outlined some of the imprinted leaves and some text. In addition, there were also cuts, tears and ripped edges around the compositional paper.

The self-portrait was symbolic of the capacity for Artist Educators, in particular herself, to be a creative problem solver and use art to process and work through the joys

and struggles of life. Vanessa explained that the blank pages represented internal thinking and feelings and potential expressions of the heart and mind. Because the pages were closed, they symbolized her need to go “inward, preserve energy and contemplate before opening herself to others.” The red ribbon is reminiscent of “life blood” and the broken sewing needle and thread were examples of tools that could be used to create or mend. Vanessa expressed, “I love that I had a broken needle, because you don’t need a sharp needle for paper. You don’t need to have the exact, right tool to make things work, [as Artist Educators] we creatively problem-solve.” The compositional paper was also intentionally cut, torn and ripped to symbolize thinking and acting outside the box. Vanessa said that the use of mixed-media “extends the possibility and depth” of her process and work as an Artist Educator. “I don’t always have the answers” but she believes the practice of art making can lead to the answers. In addition to the joy and inspiration acquired from teaching and working with children, Vanessa also remarked about the tensions that can be found within the Artist Educator identity. She commented on the amount of time and energy required to engage others, as well as honor her own artistic practice. “There are times I feel torn and I wonder why do I struggle so much with life, teaching, etc.?” The word “Help” was written at the bottom of her self-portrait and was a reminder of what she does for others, as well as what she personally requires from time to time. In the end, Vanessa recognized that help often comes from keeping oneself open and making the time to balance individual responsibilities with the need to engage artistic expression, and this is just a natural part of her life cycle and practice as an Artist Educator.

**Lexi (5).** The self-portrait Lexi created reflected both symbolism and representational abstraction. Lexi conceptually and technically engaged the word “resist” to express her feelings on the duality of being an artist and being a teacher:

“When I think of resist, it’s the idea of two different materials that do not typically want to be melded together, but somehow are and creates a constant duality. Being an Artist Educator possesses an interesting tension and struggle for balancing this duality and figuring how and where this fits into my life.”

The imagery used was reminiscent of a natural landscape, as was her earthy toned palette of blues, greens, pale yellow, white, black and grays. A large, centered circle that looks like the moon or an eye, represented a creative life force. Shading and color was used to reflect different aspects, a light side and dark side of the moon, symbolizing a duality and contrast which was necessary for “the spark for creativity energy.” Surrounding the moon appeared to be bodies of water and fluid. Lexi explained that water was like her experience with the creative process. “Water cannot always be controlled and as it ebbs and flows it sometimes pummels the earth or lightly flows around the earth.” For Lexi, creativity was cyclical and sometimes unpredictable. The drips specifically represented the chaos and lack of control Lexi sometimes felt when she was not engaging directly in art making:

I struggle and sometimes feel like my artistry gets lost, but then a balance is found when I embrace the duality of being an artist and teacher. The balance is clear when an idea is generated and the seed of an idea is planted with my students and then birthed [through their artwork].



Embracing this process and cycle was part of the experience of being an Artist Educator. Lexi noted, “light is used to having darkness around, but it still shines on.” Embracing the tensions between the light and dark was also part of the experience of being an Artist Educator.

**Jackson (6).** The self-portrait Jackson created was both conceptual and abstract. Jackson said that this self-portrait reflected two aspects of himself as an Artist Educator, “optimism and pessimism.” He attributes those qualities as both personal and indicative of the duality of his identity as an Artist Educator. If Jackson was to title this artwork, he said it would be called, “Pessimist: Drowning in the Chaos, Optimist: Swimming in the Colors.”

On a piece of wood there were photographic transfers, images of his own sensory body parts like, eyes, mouth, nose and an ear. In addition to the photographic transfers, Jackson used a paint dripping technique, like that of revered abstract artist, Jackson Pollack. He used five different colored latex paints, (red, yellow, blue, green, black and white) to create his desired effect of being consumed and “swallowed up” by [life experiences].

Jackson loved making conceptual art and playing with ideas. If you look closely at the self-portrait, Jackson said you will notice “pieces of me, peeking out through the murk.” This was intentional as Jackson’s artwork invited viewers to look more carefully at the details of the imagery. “Taking a closer look at art is just thrilling” says Jackson, and “I do not want somebody to just walk by my artwork and not give it a second glance. There is satisfaction in both making art and in having others look at your artwork.”

Jackson expressed that he cares about showing others information and enjoys perspective taking, which was something he teaches his students, along with “how to embrace one's experiences and make artistic expressions that are visually engaging.” Jackson commented that people often do not understand or appreciate abstract representations. He said, “My color choices were very strategic and abstract art does not always show this, but I did have intention with this self-portrait.” Jackson believed that if people understood artistic intention, then perhaps they would appreciate the value of creative ideas and artistic expression in all its forms. In essence, Jackson’s self-portrait was a visual statement on the combined process of “reflection and the process of art making to inform, inspire, question, and respond to what is happening around you,” which is what he believed an Artist Educator does.

The Artist Educators also participated in an interactive focus group interview and individual follow-up interviews to explore the three guiding research questions.

### **Focus Group & Individual Interview Results**

The questions used in the interactive focus group interview were intended to establish further a dialectic understanding of identity, intentions, and choices with regards to claiming the identity of Artist Educator. The participant responses expressed unique and interesting nuances, as well as uncanny similarities. Research Question One presented the following themes and findings: (a) calling to a vocation, (b) importance of art and art making, (c) importance of teaching and art education, and (d) living a creative life.

### **Calling to a Vocation**

In addition to identity and purpose, as observed in the self-portraits, the theme of a “calling” or call to a vocation emerged. During the focus group interview all the participants spoke directly about or alluded to the people, events, and/or revelations that inspired them to become an Artist Educator. I shared the following with the participants regarding how I have heeded the calling to the vocation of a visual arts educator and claimed the identity of Artist Educator:

*At an early age, I knew I was an artist and when I was in second or third grade, I knew I wanted to be a visual arts educator, just like Mrs. Javorsky, who was my mentor and art teacher from Kindergarten through Eighth Grade. I was so inspired by her spirit, artistry and sense of creativity, I wanted nothing more than to be like her. I felt a strong connection and was drawn to the life I witnessed of my childhood mentor. I definitely feel like being an Artist Educator was a calling that emanated from the depths and every fiber of my being.*

In the individual follow-up interviews I presented the following question to all the participants, “Do you think being an Artist Educator is a ‘calling’?” Both Georgia and Lexi identified with my experience and had similar experiences with visual arts educators from their childhood. Both encountered an art teacher during their high school years that influenced their decision to consider pursuing a career as a visual arts educator.

I have always known I was an artist. I remember Art was a different experience from the rest of my high school experience. It was a safe space where I could be myself and explore my creativity. I realized that I wanted to get a job and apply

my [artistic] skills. I also realized that I wanted to give back and be that person that is there for someone, like my art teacher was for me. (Lexi)

All the participants responded with a “yes” to the question of whether or not being an Artist Educator is a calling. However, there were some concerns about semantics. Some of the participants were not sure if the word ‘calling’ would be an accurate description for their experiences. There was skepticism for the word ‘calling’ to mean some type of fixed internal or external response to summoning (Bullough Jr. & Hall-Kenyon, 2012), especially with regards to towards teaching, as I had described. When I probed further as to why the participants thought or felt this way, the responses varied, just like the individuality of each participant. All the participants could relate to realizing and further understanding they were creative and artistic individuals at a young age. Yet, becoming a teacher was not necessarily a passion or first choice. In fact, three out of the five participants in this study did not start their professional careers in visual arts education. After college, Kay and Vanessa pursued careers as visual artists and Jackson went into the military.

I’m not sure I would phrase it as a calling, because I arrived at being an Artist Educator through trial and error. I did not enjoy the work I did while I was in the military. When I left the military, I went to college. When it was time for me to declare a major, I always loved creativity and design, so I figured art would be a good path to take. I knew I did not want to live as the stereotype of an impoverished artist though. I enjoyed sharing stuff and teaching my brothers how to do things when I was younger, so I thought that art education would be a

dependable and a good way to spend my time. Looking back, I can see that everything in my life built to it (becoming an Artist Educator). If I wasn't an Artist Educator, what would I do? I do not have an answer to this question because I cannot imagine doing anything else. (Jackson)

In comparison to my claims, the majority of participants believed 'calling' to be more like an affirmation and transcendent experience (Zaleski, 2016) of engaging the world in a significant way. Embracing art education as an act of service and helping others was a constant premise. Kay offered the following insight:

[Artist Educators] are in a service career which requires stamina, energy, and a willingness to focus on others. Teaching is a calling for community. It requires us to put aside ourselves to be available to the students and people. It is hard for people to do. When you teach it's not about you, it's about others.

Georgia agreed with Kay that teaching was an altruistic act, but she also believed that there was a touch of narcissism that encompassed teaching as well:

It's something inside people to want to share and show how to do things. I get the best feeling, a jazz, from showing artistic techniques... this is how I know I was supposed to live a creative life for sure.

There was also agreement among the participants with the idea of education being a difficult vocation and how hard being an Artist Educator can be. This was especially considered true for Vanessa, "Honestly, I have tried to avoid it and yet I keep coming back... [If it wasn't a calling] why else would we do this job?"

**Importance of Art and Art Making**

As part of their identity and calling to a vocation, all the participants reflected on the importance of art and art making in their lives. All the participants acknowledged that they were artists and have been engaging their creativity and making art since they were little children. Parents, teachers, and friends recognized and supported their proclivity for art. As the participants matured, they realized that the urge to create was deeply innate and making art was an essential component that defines their identity and being. Jackson noted:

I enjoy art and made art for the pleasure of making art. I find I have so many ideas and I love coming up with ideas, if I had time I would be creating, and turning some of the ideas into reality. The childhood desire to make something is still powerful for me. The satisfaction you get from doing something is always a good reason to engage.

The participants shared a variety of instances of how and why art and making art was important to them. Art and making art was described as essential for self-expression and an important way to communicate and connect with others. As Georgia emphatically expressed:

I have to do it – it's just so intrinsic and it's an expression of how I feel and how I express myself. Art is a way to say something about a person, situation or life event or about how I feel or look at something and how I want somebody to see something.

Art and art making was also described as being mentally and emotionally therapeutic for the participants. Participants indicated that engaging art making was necessary for processing and working through difficult personal situations, like dealing with challenging coworkers or family members, getting a divorce, or experiencing health issues.

Vanessa shared:

Art helps me approach struggle in a helpful way. I work through stuff. It saved my life on many occasions and keeps me balanced. Making art allows me to go into the environment and do what I need to do. Art has allowed me to be and do whatever I want and nobody can tell me I'm wrong.

Engaging art was also integral to making sense of community and national issues, like the 2017 political climate and presidential elections of the United States and even tragic life events like 9/11 and terrorism. Kay recalled that after the 2017 presidential election, "I found sanctuary [in art] and found it soothing to engage the creative process."

I shared with the focus group the challenges and rewards of using art to process and heal in the wake of 9/11:

*My first-year as a visual arts educator, 9/11 happened. I was 22 years old and teaching elementary school students in grades K-4. Being a novice teacher and not having any training through my art educator preparation program to handle such a vast upheaval, I let my artistic sensibilities navigate the aftermath of the nation's tragedy. In the weeks that followed, I used art to engage my school community and had students participate in large scale collaborative art projects,*

*such as murals and installations, that filled our school building. Through art, the students and I experienced connection and community through dialoguing, listening, and making art to express our sense of connection, patriotism and resilience. We transformed fear, tragedy, despair, and uncertainty into hope, love, and peace. As a learning community, we became stronger, and art helped us to process, make sense and reveal who we are and aspire to be.*

### **Importance of Teaching and Art Education**

Equally important to art and art making is teaching and art education for Artist Educators. Kay and others mentioned the sweetness of the “lightbulb moment,” when students developed an understanding from a lesson. More fascinating to me was how the participants also spoke about the significance of fusing their artistic studio practice with their teaching practice. The following sentiment was expressed by Georgia and shared by all during the focus group interview session, “For me, there is no division. I don't consciously think, I am a teacher and then I go home and think I am an artist. I am an artist teaching my craft.”

The value of teaching held both personal and communal significance for the Artist Educator. As Vanessa poignantly stated, “Making art and teaching art keeps me connected.”

Georgia expressed:

An Artist Educator has the ability to organize thoughts, transmit info, and communicate aspects of the artistic processes to others. It is a natural outreach to do this in a classroom. I talk about art being a part of our lives all the time. It is a



choice to nurture the artist inside of you and I will do everything I can to show you how to learn in a different way. I believe in the power of art and what we do as [Artist Educators] is important. You can be a great artist, but if you cannot communicate effectively then you are not teaching.

Lexi responded with the following thoughts:

When you teach art, you lay the groundwork or foundation for becoming an artist and teaching them about creativity and originality. You're teaching techniques and tools and a language to use and perhaps, hopefully, it might inspire them to become an artist.

Participants spoke about the goals of their teaching practice, as well as the essential skills they impart to their students, such as appreciation for differences and challenges and the importance of thinking critically and taking risks. Jackson shared the following:

My aim is wanting students to create things that are well done. I have worked hard at creating a reputation that my classes are fun, but hard work. I'm a very hard worker and I value hard work, thinking and thought and being thoughtful. I hate the notion that art is easy, because it is really difficult to make art that is good. It's difficult to come up with your own idea and then use the materials to craft a well-designed work of art. It's not easy. I share with students that I sometimes have problems that take me a year to process. Then I tell them that is the reason why I give a week to process and problem-solve a well thought-out idea for each assignment. I am looking for well-done art, which takes a lot of

work and thought. I try to teach my students the value in not writing off something just because it's difficult or you don't understand it. If you take the time to think and understand it, you will better appreciate it.

Jackson further exclaimed:

My favorite thing I say to my students, which I say every single day, and it bugs the hell out of some of them, is – ‘You're the artist.’ They ask me all kinds of questions and they clearly want me to give them an answer, and I say, ‘I don't know. You're the artist. There's a lot of solutions here, some will work out better than others, and I really do not know what to tell you, except that you're the artist.’ And they can't stand it - some of them.

After ruminating on Jackson's points, Vanessa disclosed the following:

There's a difference between structure and ideas. I think it's harder to do, letting them figure it out rather than giving them the answers. It's not easy for me, it makes me vulnerable to not know what to do and have my students look at me and question me because they say, "aren't you the teacher?" and this leads me to wonder and think about how my faults, challenges, or limitation affects them.

Kay also added the following insight:

To be an artist is so personal, and I am not sure this is something that can be taught. But we can be role models and challenge our students to be creative, original, and take risks.

In addition to teaching about using art materials and artistic techniques for self-expression, the participants indicated that they focus on teaching about creative thinking

and the creative process, reflection on the artistic experience, as well as the value of engaging risk taking in their artistic endeavors:

I try to help my students be creative and strong. These are the two things I wish for everybody. It doesn't matter if they are an artist or not. Many of my young students do not always see the worth in their own work and I try to show them the value and impact their artistic expressions have. I am working with my students on the metacognition part and trying to help them think about why they are doing what they are doing and how we need to look at things for each particular issue within the artwork. (Vanessa)

“Creativity and to be original involves risk. By taking risks you learn to appreciate all the different possibilities and resolutions.” (Kay) Georgia continued:

I tell my students, ‘If there is no risk then there is no reward. In life, when you go out there, push the envelope. You’ll never know what happens, unless you try!’ It is hard and challenging take risks, but that is a big part of creativity.

Jackson reflected:

I say this to my students, ‘A lot of you will be going on and not have anything to do specifically with art in your life after high school, but you will need to be creative thinkers, because creative thinking is what advances society and creates progress. I want to help you become a little more creative and original. That’s my role and it’s what we work on in my class.’ I want everybody that comes through

my classes to be more creative thinkers and that is what I am doing as an Artist Educator in the greater scheme of things.”

A theme that emerged in our conversation was the necessity and importance of engaging a studio practice as an Artist Educator. The participants recognized that they know other visual arts educators who did not make art or engage in an artistic studio practice outside of their art classroom and this amazed them:

There are art teachers that have said to me that I do not make art. And I am mystified by that. I do not get that. What does that look like? I don't know how that works for the classroom? (Georgia)

I know a few people who teach art that feel it is not necessary to make art. I'm mystified. The same lessons are trotted out with the same results. It's very formulaic and I think this is because they do not practice art outside the classroom. (Kay)

While the idea of not making art as a visual arts educator mystified some of the participants, Jackson countered with following comments:

I am not mystified at all that some art educators do not make or practice art because it is much easier to just not do it. A lot of humans by nature are lazy. It's harder to carve out time to make art and for those of us in here, we accept this challenge because we have a need to make art.

Others shared their insights into the significance of fusing an artistic studio practice with a teaching practice. Vanessa shared her concerns about this:

When art teachers don't make art, they sometimes usurp the kids' ability to be creative. It reminds me that adults often times usurp creativity from kids, by living vicariously through them. I see it all the time with parent volunteers in my classroom. Because Someone did it for them, now they want to do it for someone else.

Lexi reminisced about her limited childhood art education experience and why she believed being an Artist Educator was important:

My elementary art teacher did not make art outside of the classroom and we did crafts and crafts based projects that were limiting. When students know you're an artist and you understand the process and experience [you're teaching them] its authentic. This is why it is important to be creating art.

Georgia presented the following concluding thoughts:

Do you have to make art to be a good Artist Educator? I think you do. To be a good visual arts educator, strong visual arts educator, you have to create art and practice your craft. I don't understand how some art teachers cannot create their own art. There is an investment process in teaching and art education. You need passion and desire to invest and [for Artist Educators] it means creating and engaging your own art too!

### **Living a Creative Life**

During the interactive focus group interview, participants indicated that living a creative life was a big part of what inspired the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy. The participants defined a creative life as choosing to be “authentic,”

“open,” “reflective,” and an “explorer of the world and artistic expression.” To have a greater understanding of the concept of living a creative life, I asked the following question during the individual follow-up interviews, “How do you live a creative life?” The following responses were consistent with the literature (Cameron, 2002/2016; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997/2013; Daichendt, 2012; Robinson 2013, 2015). An intriguing aspect of the creative life for an Artist Educator is the ability and desire to commune with others about one’s experiences. This very notion counters the stereotype coined by George Bernard Shaw, “Those who can, do; and those who cannot, teach,” because the Artist Educator desires and intentionally fuses their own artistic practice with their teaching pedagogy to create a practice and way of life that connects with others in the quest for personal transformation.

Despite the pervasive concept of the creative life, the act of living a creative life is still an individualized process and as unique as each of the participants and the examples they provided. For instance, Lexi expressed that she finds inspiration through “exploring different art materials, journaling, drawing in her sketchbook, writing poetry, visiting art museums and galleries and going for walks, especially in nature.” Lexi described the creative life as an “ebb and flow” with periods of both art production and contemplation:

I try to be open to experiences and limit my expectations to let the creative process flow organically for me. When I’m not producing art, I use time and space to reflect. I take the time to be in nature and present within the moment.

For Kay, not living a creative life was simply unimaginable, “I do not think I can live another life, nor do I think I can instruct someone how to live a creative life.” Kay

expressed how personal she felt living a creative life was and it was something that couldn't necessarily be taught, but it could be modeled. "I think any measure or standard comes from observing me and the things that I do." Kay then emphasized the following, "I don't find the time, I take the time to be creative." With respect to teaching and working with her students, this was a message she offers to them. "[Do] Not be concerned with how other people spend their time. Pursue your passion. Do the things you want to do." Kay then noted that "I allow the time creativity needs; it's how I've always been."

Similar to Kay's thoughts regarding teaching how to live the creative life, Georgia believed that:

I can't teach students how to live a creative life, or do it for them; but I can teach them what creativity looks like. I believe engaging in art teaches one how to apply creativity to other parts of your life and [as an Artist Educator] you model being creative, by being creative in the class.

For Vanessa, living the creative life is a conscious choice to live an authentic life and she described it as, "putting into action [one's ability for] questioning, awareness, imagination and expression." From her perspective, living an authentic life entailed "looking at trials as learning opportunities; trying to see all perspectives knowing that we cannot be objective, only closer to it. Everything affects us and we are all connected." Thus, living creatively is using art and artistic expression to process, communicate and understand life experiences. Vanessa strongly believes that living a creative life and

being an artist is not about “natural born talent”, but rather the ability to explore, play, and experiment. Vanessa voiced the following opinion:

The heart of Art is about exploration, pushing boundaries, and questioning assumptions. It’s about letting go and allowing yourself to make crap and play and explore. I realize this and honor this. I am concerned with looking at ‘what did I learn or figure out from this experience and how can I use this?’

Vanessa concluded, “creativity needs to be cultivated if we are to be a well-rounded, healthy community.” Therefore, opening oneself up and developing the capacity to engage one’s imagination and creativity is essential and something that could and should be taught.

### **Findings for Research Question One**

There were three findings for Research Question One regarding the motivation and inspiration for Artist Educators to fuse together their artistic studio practice and their teaching pedagogy.

#### **Finding 1: The Identity of an Artist Educator Was Synchronized with a Call to a Vocation.**

Participants suggested their identity by describing their defining dispositions and characteristics, as well as responding to the call to a vocation. Participants in this study created individual artistic expressions in the form of a self-portrait. The elements of visual art and principles of design used to create the self-portraits represented the dispositions and characteristics that the participants felt were definitive to their identity as Artist Educators.



In addition to the creation of self-portraits, participants engaged in discourse concerning identity during the focus group interview and individual follow-up interview sessions. Participants' sense of self and identity was strongly connected to a calling to a vocation and the desire to live a creative life significantly motivated and inspired Artist Educators to fuse their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy. This concept was a critical finding because it was the foundation from which other findings in this study would emerge. Participants believed that identity was the result of inherent dispositions and connected to fulfilling a call to a vocation to create art and teach art simultaneously. Although all the data suggested a unanimous understanding and descriptions were consistent with the literature regarding identity, participants' individual experiences colored their understanding of a "calling" or call to a vocation.

**Finding 2: The Necessity to Create Art and Teach Art Simultaneously Was Intrinsic for Artist Educators.**

Participants described the value of engaging an artistic studio practice and teaching art concurrently as an intrinsic need. Participants believed that engaging in both artmaking and teaching art was powerful and held personal significance that traced back to their identity. The data supported the universality of this awareness and the descriptions provided by the participants in this study explain this unique phenomenon. Participants also agreed that fusing their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy was essential for their desire to practice and live a "creative life" as presented in the literature (Cameron, 2002/2016; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997/2013; Daichendt, 2012; Robinson 2013, 2015).

### **Finding 3: Artist Educators Live a Creative Life and Believe It Was a Personal Practice That Cannot Be Taught.**

Living a creative life was desirable and important to the Artist Educators in this study because it fundamentally provided meaning and value to their existence. The data collected confirmed the significance of this concept.

The participants expressed that living a creative life was a personal journey and experience, and not something that could necessarily be taught. Despite the personal nature of the creative life, the participants did concur that modeling and exemplifying the creative life was paramount for Artist Educators. Additionally, the participants agreed that exploring creativity and accessing creativity were essential and should be taught. This notion was important because creativity was necessary for enriching individual lives and advancing society and it was an essential acuity (Strickland, 2017) for an adequate twenty-first century education (Kohl & Oppenheim, 2012).

Research Question Two examined the themes that emerged when participants were asked to identify the factors that inhibited or supported their practice.

#### **Research Question Two: What are the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of the synergistic practices of Artist Educators?**

#### **Autoethnographic Reflection**

*I believe the factors and conditions that inhibit the synergistic practices of Artist Educators can be extrinsic and intrinsic. The primary extrinsic example that comes to mind is a lack of respect and support for the arts and arts education programs from school administrators, colleagues, as well as the local community. This can make the work of an Artist Educator frustrating and challenging, especially if an Artist Educator is*

*constantly advocating and struggling against antiquated systemic practices and communal values. Intrinsic examples include insecurities, (not trusting oneself) and fears, (being vulnerable or appearing ignorant) and the inability for self-scrutinization.*

*I believe the conditions that support the effectiveness of the synergistic practices of Artist Educators can be extrinsic, such as professional respect and communal support, as well as optimal financial resources for art education programs. However, I am primarily interested in the factors that are intrinsic in nature and according to Palmer (1993) foster the conditions for “openness, boundaries, and hospitality” (p. 71), which are essential for authentic learning and “creating a space in which the community of truth is practiced” (xii). These intrinsic factors include, the audacity to be authentic (integrity and vulnerability), accountable (dependable, consistent and safe), as well as compassionate (caring, kindness, and concern), and empathic (fidelity and non-judgmental responsiveness).*

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### **Focus Group and Individual Interview Results**

The second guiding research question and sub-questions posed in the interactive focus group interviews and the individual follow-up interviews were intended to reveal what the participants perceived as the factors that both inhibit and support their respective practices as Artist Educators. The questions encouraged participants to reflect upon their experiences and consider both the common and unique qualities that could negatively and positively impact the practice of an Artist Educator. Research Question Two presented the following themes and findings: (a) extrinsic and intrinsic factors and conditions that

inhibited an Artist Educator practice, and (b) intrinsic and extrinsic factors and conditions that supported an Artist Educator practice.

### **Extrinsic Inhibitions**

The first theme that emerged from the participants was that of extrinsic and intrinsic factors and conditions that inhibited the effectiveness of one's practice as an Artist Educator. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the participants easily identified extrinsic conditions that they felt inhibited their practice. All of the extrinsic conditions recognized by the participants were universal and focused on the educational system and their school organizations, in particular, school building administrators and colleagues with their inherent assumptions surrounding art education.

There was consensus among the participants that school building administrators and general education colleagues, (K-5 grade level teachers in elementary schools and academic discipline teachers in secondary schools) did not completely support the role or appreciate the work of Artist Educators. For some, this realization occurred during their initial job interview. Georgia described her interview experience and expressed how excited she was to present her portfolio of personal artwork, but was soon discouraged when the administrator did not want to see it. Georgia recounted:

My principal did not care to see my artwork and she did not care about me being an artist. She indicated that she would be paying me to be an art teacher, not an artist. I was blown away and did not have a response at the time. I just could not believe she didn't care about such an important part of who I am. Even today, years later, it still feels like [Artist Educators] fight a battle of worthiness

constantly and we question whether we are on the same plane as other colleagues in math or science. You have to be strong and know yourself and believe in your value in order to survive.

Kay offered the following insight to expand on the lack of appreciation and the perception of Artist Educators as professionals:

I don't think my administrator or colleagues, or school systems in general, appreciates the work of artists and having Artist Educators engage work in the field they are teaching. For example, they give accolades to science teachers who go off and do some scientific study during the summer; but they do not always think Artist Educators working on their art would be considered the same thing.

Participants were further prompted to share specific examples of the factors that they felt inhibited their practice. Vanessa provided the following example of how she felt there was a lack of support for her practice. She described how her studio art classroom and climate was very different from the general educators' classrooms in her building. She believed her administrator and many of her colleagues were afraid of "messiness" and what she considered "non-linear practices" within the studio art classroom:

What inhibits me is [administration and colleagues] that say that I need to do things like they do and have a classroom that looks a certain way - their way - not mine. This inhibits me. I have to constantly advocate and explain to my principal that what one sees is not what may be happening. It may look chaotic in my room, but it is intentional and just organized in a different way. Art exploration and

artistic expression can be messy at times, but it does not mean the students are not learning.

Within the process of talking about the extrinsic factors that inhibited one's practice, an interesting conversation about expectations, both external and internal, unfolded. Jackson noted that we as Artist Educators were technically certified K-12 visual arts educators in Maine and New Hampshire, and that other colleagues did not have that breadth of experience with their certifications. Furthermore, there was an irony found within the expectations that come from possessing such a certification. Primarily that visual arts educators were K-12 certified, therefore they must be "masters" of all things they teach.

Despite being K-12 certified, Jackson expressed:

I can't be a master of everything. I'm asked to do so many different things, that a math or science teacher wouldn't do. The fact that I am asked to do that is unrealistic, so I just have to be honest with my students and say, 'listen guys, this is my specialty [sculpture and ceramics] and I'm teaching this [painting or drawing] now and I'm competent enough in it, but there is just going to be some things that I just don't know or can't do as well. but I am really good at using my resources and I'm going to help you to the best that I can.

Georgia agreed with Jackson about the expectations associated with a K-12 visual arts education certification and noted the differences she felt that existed between the elementary and secondary art education levels:

The expectations at the high school level is to teach certain skills and more of a DBAE [Disciplined Based Art Education] approach. I miss the freedom to let students explore creativity and just go on to express themselves, like in the elementary levels. I am more interested in the creativity part, and I know for me that I have to do both, but it is challenging.

With regards to the K-12 visual art education certification expectations and commenting on both Jackson and Georgia's assertions, Vanessa contended:

I believe we do not need to know all about what we teach. The current educational system [and its expectations] keeps us from letting education be more organic and communal. Skills can be learned by experimenting, and our job is mostly, or should be mostly, to facilitate students discovering their own path.

When external parameters and limitations, such as lack of administrative support, inadequate resources or a constricted art supply budget, make the work of teaching challenging for Artist Educators, maintaining an optimistic perspective amidst uncertainty and the ability to reframe situations was essential. Reframing was a subversive quality, as it required the capacity to shift thoughts and adapt circumstances. Reframing is also known as "*frame breaking* [and] happens naturally in the art world" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p.13). The subversive nature of the arts was a form of inspiration for many artists and had allowed for the creation of new artistic styles and movements throughout history.

The participants agreed that Artist Educators could be subversive, as they were adept at thinking creatively, solving problems and making things "work," especially

when it involved dealing with external conditions, such as inadequate budgets and supplies or challenging antiquated systemic practices involving classroom management or student engagement. Subsequently, Artist Educators who did not conform to the general expectations or traditional educational practices could be perceived as threatening to the status quo of a school system or learning community, as the arts are naturally subversive and viewed as such by society (Kohl and Oppenheim, 2012). To this end, acting subversively may be a necessity for Artist Educators to reframe their particular situations and as Kay remarked, “Having fun with limitations and parameters can be stimulating. For example, based on what supplies you have and can use, this could be a creative problem to solve when lesson planning.”

### **Intrinsic Inhibitions**

As the focus group conversation about expectations ensued, the focus from extrinsic factors turned to more intrinsic factors that can inhibit an Artist Educator’s practice. With regards to feeling and succumbing to the pressure from others’ expectations, Vanessa referred to Georgia’s previous comments and noted:

I think this kind of pressure is put on you by the administrators, but whether you choose to follow the expectations placed on you by the administration is still your choice. I will never be voted as the best art teacher in the world because I do not care about [living up to another’s expectations]. I know in my heart of hearts that I am doing the best job I can do to do all the things we discussed when we started today’s conversation, especially helping my students learn to express themselves [effectively].



Vanessa further contended that it is important to be mindful of personal and internal expectations that can hinder one's practice, "I also think that intentions can sometimes prevent us from seeing the beautiful way something happens and turns out within our work."

Participants revealed that fears, such as not feeling competent or skilled enough with art materials or comfortable with different processes, could be intrinsic inhibitors to one's practice. For example, Georgia commented on her need to be confident with the skills she teaches her students:

It is definitely a pressure I feel since I started to teach high school. When I am teaching certain materials and techniques, I need to know how to do this. My students want to see me do it and they question whether I can do it.

Vanessa added her thoughts about confidence issues, especially when engaging in a new practice and teaching strategy:

It's not easy for me. It makes me vulnerable to not know what to do and have my students look at me and question me because they say, 'Aren't you the teacher?' and this leads me to wonder and think about how my faults, challenges, or limitation affects them. Yet, when I took myself, my biases and my ego out of the situation with students and sent them to hold space and use tools for themselves, they had an 'a-ha' moment and I learned a huge lesson about trusting at our most fearful.

Overall, the participants agreed that the need to be mindful and have a positive attitude was critical, as an individual's intrinsic mindset was within the locus of one's own control.

### **Intrinsic Influences**

The second theme participants identified were intrinsic and extrinsic factors that supported the effectiveness of an Artist Educator's practice. All of the intrinsic factors recognized by the participants were innate aptitudes and/or dispositions. These aptitudes and/or dispositions accounted for an individual's proclivity for both art and teaching and the participants felt were absolutely necessary to be an effective Artist Educator. The universal responses from all the participants included being "creative," "authentic," "respectful," "curious and passionate about art and life," as well as "engaging," "having strong interpersonal skills," and "love for students and learning." Other explicit aptitudes and dispositions the participants described that Artist Educators possess included the following:

"Charisma and perspective taking." (Lexi)

"Being aware and slightly-crazy." (Vanessa)

"Empathy, nurturing and genuine care for people / kids." (Georgia)

"Hard-working, reflective, confidence and persistence." (Jackson)

"Humor, patience, be fair, kind, and a good listener." (Kay)

Subsequently, an important interconnection became visible. The aptitudes and/or dispositions identified by the participants as intrinsic influences that effectively support their practice were the same qualities the participants associated with their identity and a

call to a vocation, as previously examined within Research Question One. Essentially, the aforementioned aptitudes and/or dispositions were significant for Artist Educators because they were fundamental to the inherent desire and need to make art and teach art simultaneously. Thus, these aptitudes and/or dispositions were not only key factors in supporting the practice of Artist Educators, but they also served to intrinsically motivate Artist Educators to fuse their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy to practice and live a creative life.

### **Extrinsic Supports**

In addition to intrinsic influences in the form of dispositions and characteristics that were defining of Artist Educators, the participants also discussed the importance of extrinsic supports that helped them effectively engage their practice. Participants acknowledged that the universal conditions that were previously identified as inhibitors, (1) lack of administrative and communal support, (2) unfair professional assumptions and expectations, and (3) lack of resources such as money, time, and colleagues, could be reframed and turned into the following extrinsic supports for their practice: (1) administrative and communal support, (2) professional respect and collegiality, and (3) optimal resources for art education programs.

In addition to the universal extrinsic supports mentioned above, several of the participants who teach at the high school level commented on the value of being part of a team or department. For example, Georgia expressed how she appreciates having departmental colleagues:

Being part of a team is helpful. Being the only art teacher in a school by yourself is tough. It's like being an island and you are constantly advocating for 'stuff'.

Having a team to work with is awesome. You can get help, share ideas, as well as responsibility.

Kay noted the significance of working with a team was solidarity and alluded to the familiar adage that 'two or more heads are better than one.' Kay further elaborated, "especially when dealing with administration, having a team is helpful and a group voice reduces the possibility of being dismissed because you are only one voice."

Although there was an understanding of the comments regarding the value of "teams," Vanessa and Christopher disputed Georgia and Kay's assertions and offered examples of when working with a team was not always positive. Vanessa expressed, "I think there are benefits and drawbacks to having a team. I do not think teams of art teachers are always supportive or better." Vanessa then explained how individual ego and competitiveness can create tension and a lack of authentic engagement and support within a team. I agreed with Vanessa, and further expounded:

*Having worked within an art department at the high school level, I experienced the tension Vanessa mentioned. I learned very quickly that 'teamwork' is not the same as 'collaboration,' and for a department or team to truly work well together, not only does there need to be an underlying respect, but more importantly, a desire to want to authentically engage with one another. In the "dog eat dog" world and culture of competitiveness that we are living in, the*

*essential vulnerability and authenticity it takes to earnestly engage and collaborate with others is very challenging and difficult to achieve.*

Both Vanessa and I agreed that in order for a team to be effective and reflect the claims presented by Georgia and Kay, it required the combination of the right people to create trust and engage one another honestly, as well as invest in a shared vision.

### **Findings for Research Question Two**

There were two findings for Research Question Two regarding the positive and negative factors and conditions that can affect the overall practice of Artist Educators.

#### **Finding 4: Both Extrinsic and Intrinsic Factors and Conditions Could Inhibit an Artist Educator's Practice.**

Participants easily identified extrinsic conditions that inhibited their practice as an Artist Educator. The universal conditions that were identified by all the participants included: (1) lack of administrative and communal support, (2) unfair professional assumptions and expectations, and (3) lack of resources such as money, time, and colleagues. The data also presented individualized and personal examples of extrinsic factors that challenged each of the participants. The specific experiences included: (1) administrative micro-managing, and (2) different teaching styles and philosophy.

In addition to these extrinsic factors, some intrinsic factors and conditions were also identified as potential inhibitors for an Artist Educator. The participants shared the following examples: (1) personal expectations and pressure, (2) lack of confidence, and (3) personal fears. The data also revealed that the extrinsic and intrinsic factors and conditions that could inhibit the effectiveness of an Artist Educator's practice, could

paradoxically encourage subversiveness in certain contexts and inspire innovative ways of being (Kohl & Oppenheim, 2012). Thus, when Artist Educators perceived inhibitions with mindfulness and reframed challenges, they maintained a positive and optimistic mindset so hope could be galvanized and creativity exercised to solve problem quandaries.

**Finding 5: Both Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factors and Conditions Could Support the Practice of an Artist Educator.**

Similar to Finding 4, all six participants in the focus group interview identified universal extrinsic conditions, as well as distinctive intrinsic factors that supported their practice. The universal extrinsic conditions were not surprising and included: (1) administrative and communal support, (2) professional respect, and (3) resources such as money, time, and colleagues.

The distinctive intrinsic factors centered around personal dispositions and characteristics. Examples of the basic dispositions identified included: (1) creativity, (2) authenticity, (3) respect, (4) curiosity and passion for art and life, (5) engaging, (6) interpersonal skills, and (7) love for students and learning. Additional characteristics the participants recognized include: (8) charisma, (9) mindfulness, (10) empathy, (11) reflective, (12) patience, and (13) compassion. Although these findings were not surprising, it was interesting to observe the individual responses, which provided insight into the minds of each of the participants.

The examination of Research Question Two primed the participants to openly reflect upon the impact of their art education practices. Research Question Three

consciously explores the participants' perceptions on how the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy impacts their creative and classroom practices.

**Research Question Three: How do Artist Educators perceive the fusion of their studio practice and teaching pedagogy to be impacting their creative and classroom practices?**

**Autoethnographic Reflection**

*When I thought about how the fusion of my artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy impacted my teaching and learning practice, I was reminded of the concept of “wholehearted living” introduced by Brené Brown (2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2017) and two examples immediately come to mind: authenticity and wisdom. The first example was the ability to live authentically as the result of “letting go of who [I] think [I am] supposed to be and embracing who [I am]” (Brown, 2010, p. 50). The second example was sharing the wisdom learned from courage, compassion and connection, or as Brené Brown (2010, 2012a) referred to in her research, “the gifts of imperfection.”*

**Authenticity.** *Authenticity was a desirable way of being and was connected to the concept of social identity and “how we see ourselves in relation to others” (Miller & Garran, 2008/2017, p. 5). Social identity indicators included, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity/race, health, social class, culture, religion, citizenship, political affiliations and interests. It was important to note that social identity was “relational, situational, and flexible” (p. 7) and it was usually a combination of personal choice and societal imposition (Miller & Garran, 2008/2017). According to Brené Brown authenticity required “letting go of who we think we should be and embracing who we are” (2010, p. 50) and being authentic was a practice which involved making daily choices (2012a). For me, the daily choices I have made to be authentic were a*

*commitment to integrate my mind, body and spirit to love myself and live my truth with integrity. I have found that my authenticity was achieved by claiming the identity of Artist Educator and living a creative life. By living a creative life and fusing my artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy, I was choosing to honor the following aspects of myself, such as age, gender, sexual orientation, culture, and more importantly, the artist and educator within. Subsequently, I model the importance of valuing and claiming one's identity by authentically being who I am, acting upon what I believe and living the creative life.*

*One example of how I did this is illustrated in Table 6. Table 6 was an editorial response I sent via email to G.E. Washington, the LGBTIC (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Issues Caucus) former co-chair of the NAEA NEWS, (the NAEA's professional newsletter to its members), regarding advice I gave to a teacher-intern regarding identity and "coming out."*

**Wisdom.** *As an Artist Educator, I not only shared my passion for and taught about the arts, creativity, and learning; I also imparted life lessons and wisdom that came from practicing courage, compassion and connection which was essential to living a creative life. According to Brené Brown (2010), practicing courage, compassion and connection was choosing to live authentically and specifically this means:*

Cultivating the courage to be imperfect, to set boundaries, and to allow ourselves to be vulnerable;

Exercising the compassion that comes from knowing that we are all made from strength and struggle; and



Nurturing the connection and sense of belonging that can only happen when we believe that we are enough. (p. 50)

Table 6. NAEA News Editorial Response to “Too Much Information?” (2011)

<p>E-mail to G.E. Washington, February 2, 2011</p> <p>I love experiencing serendipity! Literally a couple of days after writing and giving advice to an inquiring teacher-intern, I received my copy of NAEA News and read the LGBTIC column entitled, “Too Much Information?” I decided to respond because the topic of sharing our coming-out stories and the lessons learned from such experiences is extremely important—especially since these types of issues do not always receive due attention within universities (K-12 schools, community organizations) and teaching preparation programs. Attached are my thoughts in response to the question, “What can we learn from these kinds of stories?” and the advice I offered the teacher-intern:</p> <p><i>“The best advice I can give you regarding your role as a teacher is to be yourself—honest, authentic, and “real.” I have found that being an openly gay educator has allowed me to teach passionately and successfully, perhaps more importantly, establish genuine connections and relationships with my students and colleagues. Being “closeted” steals the energy that is required for the process and art of teaching and caring for the needs of your students. The energy used to “hide,” guard, and circumvent situations pervades the learning space—which is truly about discovering and defining our own truth, meaning, and place in our community and world. The “Truth” always trumps speculation and fear—especially if you present yourself unequivocally with integrity and authenticity on a consistent basis with your students... Once I allowed myself to be open about my sexuality within my school community, there has been no “pink elephant” standing in between me and my students and the space where learning really matters. What was once a “secret” or “mystery” has been demystified and our attention and focus is placed on the curriculum and the needs of the students.”</i></p> <p>At the end of his e-mail to me, Mr. Strickland says thanks for the “<i>efforts in supporting Artist Educators.</i>” PLEASE understand on behalf of everyone in our community I thank you, Mr. Strickland. As we each tell our stories the social dialogue around us will change.</p>
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*Within the context of my visual arts education experience, I developed quality relationships and built community with my colleagues and students by having the*

*courage to know and be myself. To do this, I recognized and accepted my own strengths and weaknesses. Within my studio art classroom, I collaborated with the students to establish norms which guided our learning, supported all of our needs, and promoted personal and communal safety. Moreover, I was clear with my intentions, consistent with my expectations and conduct, as well as I modeled integrity, dignity, respect, and vulnerability.*

*I exercised compassion by honoring the diverse voices and experiences of my students. I recognized and accepted their strengths and weaknesses and reminded them to be tender with oneself and others as we embarked on an educational journey of self-discovery, personal transformation and owning our truth(s).*

*Nurturing connections and a sense of belonging were at the heart of all learning contexts and this was especially true for visual arts education. According to Kohl & Oppenheim (2012), the arts:*

*inspire community and the skills needed to function and be creative with and for other people. The rigors of artistic discipline lead organically toward self-transformation. They help break down received and self-inflicted stereotypes by opening both the mind and heart. They produce curiosity and engagement with life, with self and others. (p. xxii)*

*It is with this understanding that I used art and creativity as processes to stimulate personal and communal meaning making. Essentially, I facilitated creative learning experiences where students discovered a sense of belonging. As students engaged a learning community through reciprocity, “where everyone is a teacher, and*

everyone is a learner” (Kohl & Oppenheim, 2012, p. 60) *embodied wisdom was a direct result of learning and thinking through making and sharing art.*

*I provided my students with an educational experience that was both personalized and empowering. Table 7 was an excerpt that was transcribed (verbatim) from a handwritten letter of gratitude by a former student. To me, the following letter validated my perceptions and illustrated the significant impact my teaching and learning practice had on my students, as a direct result from fusing my artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy into the practice of living a creative life.*

Table 7. Gratitude Letter from Former Student.

June 10, 2015

Mr. Strickland,

I will start off with thank you. Thank you for everything you’ve done for me this semester and ever since I’ve met you. You are such a bright soul with creativity practically seeping out of every pore. You have been my main encourager...

You have pushed me to alter my view and see the best in certain things. You’ve taught me lessons that have pushed me to show you work you’ll be proud of. And I bet while you were teaching me you didn’t realize the impact some of it had on me. You were just being you...

I’ve found a bit of confidence in the work I’ve done because you were confident in me. So thank you. The first step is always the hardest, but I’m making my way. So thank you so much!!

Love,  
[REDACTED]

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Focus Group and Individual Interview Results**

The last guiding research question posed in the interactive focus group interview and the individual follow-up interviews was intended to reveal what the participants perceived as the way the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy impacted their overall teaching and learning practices. Research Question Three coincidentally presented two overarching themes which were: (a) the cultivation of quality relationships, and (b) essential skills and life lessons. Furthermore, a question emerged from the focus group regarding the adequacy of terminology used to describe the identity, work, and practice of visual arts educators. This question and participant responses were presented in the section of the Research Question Three findings and then addressed more specifically in Chapter 5.

#### **Quality Relationships**

Unequivocally, the number one answer to the question, “What kind of impact does the fusion of artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy have on your teaching and learning practice?” was the cultivation of quality relationships. The importance of building community within the classroom and the role of developing quality relationships could not be overemphasized by the participants. Jackson noted that “creating strong relationships is important” to the overall culture and climate of the learning space and Georgia expressed that “relationships are what drive us to share ideas and connect to relevant life experiences and interests.”

All the participants agreed that teaching and learning was wonderful and one of the primary reasons quality relationships were important is the fact that students were the

future generations that will impact society. As Kay rhetorically asked, “Wouldn't you want to be a part of that and want [students] to learn from you to help our future?”

Every participant described the importance of quality relationships that have been made within their classroom and sustained beyond the walls of the school, as well as those that have carried on across time. Within the context of these responses, quality relationships referred to those between teachers and students, as well as between student to student.

When speaking about relationships, the participants noted that quality relationships were cultivated and began with teacher honesty and authenticity. For example, Jackson offered these thoughts:

Being authentic and honest with students is my strategy to get them to enjoy being in my room and have a good feeling about art. I think art is important. Bringing in my own artwork and showing them is one way to get them to buy in because the students can smell a fraud and they know when you are not being honest with them. You want to be as genuine as possible, to relate with them in the process. It's difficult as an art teacher to find the time to make art, but I think teaching can become robotic and technical unless you share passion and are fresh with making art. In order to get anybody interested in something, you have to be passionate about it, and that's what I am trying to do as a teacher. There's authenticity in making art and asking students to do the same. I feel like a fraud if I am not making art and I am asking my students to. It's uncomfortable for me.

Georgia noted that she appreciated the opportunity to engage her students in candid conversations that might not be able to happen in other classroom contexts or if she did not engage authentically, “I love the conversations, all the side conversations that lead to connecting and relationship building by engaging the learners, especially my non-engaged learners. This helps me to learn about the students and see how they think and understand.”

Vanessa added her thoughts about the value of the quality relationships she develops:

I offer students openness and freedom. We all want to be recognized, approved, appreciated - I do this for my students. I listen to my students. I support and give permission for students to have choice and exploration and I provide a safe space for them to express themselves.

Kay described how she would intentionally facilitate students connecting and developing relationships within her classroom, through collaborative assignments. “Essentially, I would impose getting to know other people upon my students. I know that immersing yourself and collaborating with others provided a sense of ownership and community building. Unexpected relationships develop and emerge.”

Some of the relationships that were developed endure long after high school. Several participants talked about seeing former students within the community and receiving emails or letters from both older and recent alum. Georgia expressed what an honor it was, “to learn that former students decided to take up the calling to become a visual arts educator.”

Jackson and Lexi both expressed how satisfying it was to know that they have made an impact on students when they observe and hear about how their students continue to explore art and their creativity by taking more art classes while in school or outside of their class experience, in the community and college. “I love it when students get excited about their work and are proud of their work, especially when they extend outside of school and finding opportunities to express themselves outside of school.”

(Lexi) Jackson added that:

I feel the importance of teaching is passionately steering people towards things that they love. It is cool when students pursue art outside of the classroom and continue to keep in touch, students returning after they leave high school, or coming in to work on the potter’s wheel during the summer. And I appreciate knowing and hearing about students who choose to pass along their interest or love of art to their family or friends.

### **Life Lessons and Embodied Wisdom**

Art education should be about empowerment, regardless of whether one becomes an artist or not (Kohl & Oppenheim, 2012). Based on the cultivation of quality relationships that were positive and meaningful, participants spoke reflexively about the significance of assimilated skills as it pertained to their students’ learning, as well as their own learning. The participants firmly believed that in addition to the specific technical skills acquired from a studio arts class experience, such as a specific technique with art media or understanding an artistic process, other skills were attained that can extend beyond the context of the art studio classroom. The participants described these as being

essential skills and called them “life lessons” because of their universality and direct application to the “real-world.” I would also consider this to be the same as embodied wisdom, which is the meaning-making of everyday experiences through a combination of tacit knowledge and affective learning experiences involving the body, mind and spirit (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Within the context of this study, embodied wisdom was the meaning-making conveyed through the creative processes of making art and engaging aesthetic experiences.

Subsequently, participants discussed the power of the arts to shift perspective and provide alternate points of view that were helpful for one’s meaning making process. Jackson revealed about how students with negative perceptions about art can end up taking his ceramics class and “are able to change their opinion about art and leave my class thinking that they have created something that is well done.”

In addition to the unanimous identification of aptitudes like “patience,” “perseverance,” “reflection,” “adaptability,” “accountability and responsibility,” the following life lessons were reported from each of the participants. Georgia disclosed how a former student came back to visit her and shared that what she remembers the most are the life lessons that were taught to her through Georgia’s art class. Examples of the life lessons the student learned included:

“I don't have to be right all the time and there’s no such thing as perfection.”

“I can make a mess and mistake and turn it into something.”

“Be here! Be now! Be doing what you're doing and enjoy it!”

“Never wrong in art.... There’s always more than one answer.”



“What’s the worst thing that can happen? If you don’t push the boundaries, how will you ever know? No risk, no reward!”

Georgia further contended that her teaching experience had allowed her to see that students did not always remember particular lessons about art, but the life lessons obtained from experiencing the arts were enduring and essential for personal meaning-making. Vanessa believed two fundamental life lessons she imparted to her students were that engaging imagination and play was vital to the creative process:

Play is essential to experimentation and exploring any process so I allow my students to do this in my classroom. I have a play area and let them play, think and work. I feel sorry for those people who don't understand the value or know how to play as they get older.

Lexi commented on the capacity for problem-solving skills as a life lesson: [In the arts] we present problems or tasks to the students that can have more than one answer and this is authentic to the real world; in the real world, outside of school, they will see that there is often more than one answer to a problem and they can come up with multiple answers or solutions.

Kay expressed that two life lessons that her students developed were the following: an understanding that mistakes are essential for learning; and vital communication skills, like “listening and learning to give and receive feedback.” Kay explained that the studio art classroom was a unique environment for not only discovery, but celebrating imperfection and making mistakes because, “even from failure we learn and this has to be okay.”

Participants agreed with Kay's assertions and believed that in order for a philosophy of "learning from mistakes" to manifest, it was essential that the learning environment of the studio art classroom was "hospitable," "holds clear boundaries," and most importantly, it was "safe." Kay explained why safety is important: "Engaging the creative process brings thoughts and feelings to the surface, introspective moments that let one's guard down, so the environment needs to be safe so everyone can speak their minds, process, share."

Adhering to the norms of hospitality, boundaries and safety of the studio art classroom was crucial for Kay's second life lesson: vital communication skills. Kay explained how communication skills were developed through the process and practice of critiquing artwork:

I help develop better informed citizens through the critique of artwork. It can be a level playing field in that it is a process the class shares and there is risk in sharing work, as everyone analyzes and reserves judgement and try to understand the content and message. Critiques can open minds, reduce rigidity and present the humor in things.

Jackson expressed that an important life lesson he taught his students was discovering a "personal healthy lifestyle and maintaining a healthy life after high school." To teach these concepts, Jackson specifically used his role model capacities as both an Artist Educator and Cross-Country Running Coach. Consequently, Jackson teaches about a healthy mind, body, and spirit through engaging creativity in his visual arts program and engaging physical fitness through his cross-country training program.

All the participants acknowledged that the life lessons were a natural result from modeling the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy. The participants commented how the aforementioned essential skills and life lesson were mirrored back to them and applicable to their own lives. For example, Kay noted that, “engaging the students in conversation and collaboration to speak about your art or process and this announcement of sharing ideas and processes, has helped me get back into my own art many times.” In addition, Kay explained the following:

Assignments I created based on my studio or past experiences makes it a real-world situation and literal connection between my artistic studio practice and teaching practice. There is something else that goes on where one informs the other. Explaining processes, demonstrating new mediums, advancing skills is part of the reflective process and organizing your thoughts as an Artist Educator. My understanding and ability for creating art improved because of the way I had to organize my thoughts for students. You think you may know this stuff, but it is when you have to look at it again and present it to someone else you get to know it better.

Georgia added to Kay’s thoughts about the impact of artistic studio practice on teaching:

That is the best when what you do outside comes into the classroom. And vice versa. For me, I found that when I was working realistically, my projects and lessons were more in that vein, and now that I am an abstract artist, I’m always getting them to think beyond the obvious physical nature of things. When I

develop projects for students, I am thinking of my studio work. What I do in my personal studio always leeches into your classroom, whether you like it or not. My studio practice becomes part of my teaching influence. When students see how my work connects to what they are doing in the classroom, it all seems real. Vanessa shared her thoughts about how her artmaking and teaching intertwine: I have learned by making art and helping kids make art. As a genuine arts multiple, my [creative] processes are varied and often woven together. This means I am more apt to experiment and not get hemmed into one mode of making, which means I know a lot of different things and this can be helpful to my students for their learning. I use art to process and reflect. Art helps me stretch and help others through their [life] experiences.

Lexi recalled the old adage, “art-imitates-life” and felt that this phrase best represented the fusion of her artistic studio practice and her teaching pedagogy:

I try to model and embody what I teach my students. For example, the processes of critiquing and collaboration. As a member of the Seacoast Moderns, I engage in critiques to learn from other artists. Within my school building, I collaborate with other teachers to learn and grow professionally. These are just two examples of how I work with my own peers, exactly like my students do within my classes.

Jackson mused about role modeling and shared his beliefs about the value and impact of fusing his artistic studio practice with his teaching pedagogy:

I want to have a role in advancing our society and I know that creative people, like artists and teachers, can do this. Being an [Artist Educator] is my way to

show that art is important to culture and I'm doing my part to help society advance. It's really thrilling to know that when students leave my class they have had a positive experience with art and it's going to color their perceptions of art for the rest of their life.

**Teacher: To Be or Not to Be?**

As the discussion ensued, an interesting question emerged from the focus group: "Does the word 'teacher' really imply what we do [as Artist Educators]?" The participants understood that the term 'teacher' refers to the instructor of content; however, they thought it was too limiting. The participants believed that the value and work they do as Artist Educators extends beyond the art studio classroom, and they did not think the word 'teacher' or specific titles like, 'art teacher,' 'visual arts educator' or even 'artist-teacher' effectively reflected or encompassed the totality of their creative and classroom practices.

Georgia commented:

You know, I kind of find it funny that they call us teachers. There's gotta be a better word or title for what we do. I think it is more about sparks. I like the title 'spark maker' - I need a cape! You just set off tiny fire sparks in the room... suggestions, thoughts, stories, anecdotes, personal experiences and weird things like that get kids thinking. Art [education] is not just about art making. I'll say it over and over again. When the kids leave me, they do not just remember the art making, they remember all the conversations and creative things we talked about

in the class, and all the life lessons. I am much more than an artist and art teacher.

I just don't know what title captures this!

Georgia's comments roused the focus group. *In particular, it reminded me of the importance of constructs such as self-concept, self-identification and social identity. Reflecting on the question posed about whether 'teacher' is an appropriate term or title that encapsulated the experiences the focus group discussed, I maintained conviction and a proposal.* In Chapter 5 I share my reflections, proposal and rationale for introducing the title 'Artist Educator' at the beginning of this study.

### **Findings for Research Question Three**

There were two findings for Research Question Three that addressed how the participants perceived the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy impacted their creative and classroom practices.

#### **Finding 6: Artist Educators Cultivate Quality Relationships for Teaching and Learning by Fusing Their Artistic Studio Practice and Teaching Pedagogy.**

Participants in this study believed that the development of quality relationships was essential and a direct result of fusing their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy. Quality relationships could only be established when individuals chose to practice authenticity (Brown, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2015, 2017). Participants credit being honest and authentic with the ability to live a creative life through the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy.

The data indicated that students were considered the future of our civilization, therefore, building community and forming quality relationships for teaching and

learning was an investment in what Dewey (1934, 1938) and Hein (2012) considered as basic democratic principles and the advancement of society. Subsequently, all the participants agreed that authentic learning experiences that had a lasting impact on their students were the result of engaging in quality relationships.

**Finding 7: Artist Educators Foster Life Lessons and Embodied Wisdom from the Fusion of Their Artistic Studio Practice and Teaching Pedagogy.**

Having cultivated quality relationships, as a result from practicing authenticity and living a creative life from the fusion of artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy, the fostering of essential skills, also referred to as “life lessons” and embodied wisdom was incumbent for Artist Educators. Participants explicitly expressed that they did more than just teach “art” or instruct artistic technique; they in fact imparted life lessons and helped students develop embodied wisdom through the creative processes of making art and engaging aesthetic experiences within their art studio classrooms. The data collected was a form of empirical evidence and supported this perception. As one participant mentioned, “our ability to affect others, the memory and impressions we make can be powerful.” It was this ability to impact others that validated the participants’ identity and calling to be an Artist Educator.

**Chapter Four Summary**

This chapter presented the data collected and analyzed, and the key findings of this qualitative study to answer the three interrelated guiding research questions. A detailed analysis of the autoethnographic reflections and the self-portrait artworks were provided. The chapter opened with the data acquired from the artistic expressions and art

analysis. The data from the autoethnographic reflections, focus group interviews, and individual follow-up interviews were then presented according to each of the three research questions.

A variety of analysis procedures were used, including ‘descriptive coding,’ ‘in vivo coding,’ ‘concept coding,’ and ‘pattern coding.’ The initial codes and themes for this study began with the autoethnographic perspective of the researcher and were then subsequently compared to the data that emerged from the participant artistic expressions (self-portraits), the interactive focus group interview, as well as the individual follow-up interviews. Patterns developed as a result of repeated codes, and then themes emerged. Recurrent themes were carefully examined and the findings were determined through agreement and member checking. A total of seven key findings were discovered and described:

- *Finding 1:* The identity of an Artist Educator was synchronized with a call to a vocation.
- *Finding 2:* The necessity to create art and teach art simultaneously was intrinsic for Artist Educators.
- *Finding 3:* Artist Educators live a creative life and believed it was a personal practice that cannot be taught.
- *Finding 4:* Both extrinsic and intrinsic factors and conditions could inhibit an Artist Educator’s practice.
- *Finding 5:* Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors and conditions could support the practice of an Artist Educator.
- *Finding 6:* Artist Educators cultivate quality relationships for teaching and learning by fusing their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy.
- *Finding 7:* Artist Educators foster life lessons and embodied wisdom from the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy.



All the findings exemplified the participants' reflections and lived experiences regarding their identities and practice as Artist Educators. The findings generated from this study offer implications for visual arts education practice, teacher preparation programs, and scholarship.

Chapter Four presented the findings for this study and the data that supported these findings. In Chapter Five, these findings were further examined and discussed in the context of current research and the possibilities for further actions and future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS,  
FUTURE RESEARCH AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

**Introduction**

The final chapter of this dissertation is presented in five sections. The first section provides a brief summary of the study. The second section presents a discussion of the findings of each of the three interrelated guiding research questions. The third section presents implications and addresses applications for educators, as well as institutions of higher education that seek to support the development of arts educators, specifically visual arts educators. The fourth section introduces proposals for future research based on the data and findings from this study. The fifth and final section is a personal reflection on this study and an homage to the experience of Artist Educators.

**Summary**

The purpose of this autoethnographic study was to examine the perceptions of certified K-12 visual arts educators who identified as Artist Educators, regarding the extent to which they saw themselves as both an artist and educator; further, the study examined how the perceived fusion of these two roles impacted their creative practice, as well as their classroom practice. Essentially, the study sought to provide insights to what motivated the synergistic nature of an Artist Educator to fuse the creation and teaching of art into one creative, authentic practice and way of life. Consequently, the study candidly revealed the realities of practicing and being an Artist Educator.

Four distinct bodies of literature were reviewed for this study: (a) personal and professional identities; (b) motivation, drive, synergy, and fusion; (c) the value of artistic

studio practice; and (d) art education teaching and learning practices. Examining these bodies of literature helped to illustrate both the significance of my study and the necessity to acquire perspective from various voices of those who claim the identity of Artist Educators. According to Thornton (2013) the term Artist Educator was “worthy of conceptual development” (p. 28) and further exploration because research had revealed alternative terms and conceptions of identity for visual arts educators. Thus, acquiring first-hand experiences would help scholars and others to understand better the identity of visual Artist Educators and the significance of fusing their artistic studio practices and teaching pedagogy into a creatively authentic, professional practice as a way of life. The following three interrelated research questions guided this study:

1. What motivates and inspires Artist Educators to use simultaneously their studio practice to influence their teaching pedagogy, as well as use their teaching pedagogy to influence their studio practice?
2. What are the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of the synergistic practices of Artist Educators?
3. How do Artist Educators perceive the fusion of their studio practice and teaching pedagogy to be impacting their creative and classroom practices?

### **Research Design and Approach**

After careful consideration, I used the qualitative research methodology known as autoethnography to explore my inquiry. Autoethnography was an approach to research and writing that examined an individual’s experiences through the analysis and contextualization of both personal and others cultural experiences (Adams et al., 2015). Therefore, “autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand

cultural experience (ethno)” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 1). Autoethnography challenged the canonical ways of conducting social science research and transformed qualitative research into an inductive act that was creative, political, socially-just, and socially-conscious (Ellis et al., 2011). Subsequently, personal narrative became a creative source of empowerment and a form of resistance to canonical discourses (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

Within the context of this study I used purposeful sampling to establish a small, defined focus group. Participants were selected based on personal relationships to the researcher, (affiliated with the Kittery Art Association), met basic criteria, (engaged an artistic studio practice; combined artistic studio practices and teaching pedagogy), and were certified visual arts educators from southern Maine and/or New Hampshire. Both data collection and data analysis were independent and iterative processes that followed the same five-phase schematic. The first phase explored autoethnographic data in the form of a reflective (thoughtful) and reflexive (creative and thematic) personal narrative from the researcher. I responded to the guiding research questions of this study using narrative examples in the form of vignettes that reflected my experiences as an Artist Educator. Protocol instruments were designed for the second, third, fourth, and fifth phases of the data collection processes involving the focus group participants. An interactive focus group interview served as a primary data source for the second phase. The third phase solicited additional data through the means of artistic expression and the creation of a self-portrait from each of the participants in the focus group. The fourth phase collected data through an analysis of each self-portrait, and the fifth phase collected

data through an individual follow-up interview. All the phases of data collection were recorded, transcribed, and the artistic expressions from the third phase were digitally photographed and used as an artifact for analysis.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The analysis of the study generated seven findings. Chapter Four reported and organized the data and emerging themes according to the three interrelated guiding research questions of the study, and the findings were presented. In this section, I return to a brief synopsis of the findings and insights I gained from the study. The interpretative insights derived from the seven key findings are used to explain and introduce a new educational paradigm: The Way of the Artist Educator.

The following are the seven key findings from my research study:

- *Finding 1:* The identity of an Artist Educator is synchronized with a call to a vocation.
- *Finding 2:* The necessity to create art and teach art simultaneously is intrinsic for Artist Educators.
- *Finding 3:* Artist Educators live a creative life and believe it is a personal practice that cannot be taught.
- *Finding 4:* Both extrinsic and intrinsic factors and conditions can inhibit an Artist Educator's practice.
- *Finding 5:* Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors and conditions can support the practice of an Artist Educator.
- *Finding 6:* Artist Educators cultivate quality relationships for teaching and learning by fusing their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy.
- *Finding 7:* Artist Educators foster life lessons and embodied wisdom from the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy.

Of all the seven findings, I was most surprised by the responses for *Findings 1* and 3. For example, in *Finding 1*, being an Artist Educator was acknowledged as a “calling to a vocation,” yet I was surprised to learn that the participants did not interpret calling to a vocation in the same way that I did. I believe a calling to a vocation is an internal, spiritual act that is best described by Parker Palmer (2000):

“[A calling to a vocation] is hidden in the word *vocation* itself, which is rooted in the Latin for “voice.” Vocation ... means a calling that I hear. Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am. I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity....” (pp.4-5)

Most of the participants believe a “calling to a vocation” to be more of an affirmation, rather than a personal, spiritual experience. This differing perspective required me to explore research on a “calling to a vocation” to learn more about the different ways “calling” is understood in the literature.

With *Finding 3*, it was interesting to learn that the participants do not think that a creative life is something that could be taught. The rationale presented by the participants was that living a creative life is a personal endeavor and as unique as each individual person. Despite the belief that they cannot teach someone to live a creative life, the participants agreed that they can guide students towards discovering their own creativity and help them learn how to apply it to their own lives. Subsequently, the participants expressed that they can model being Artist Educators and use their lives as one example of living a creative life. The truth exposed from this insight is that engaging visual arts is

only one way to live a creative life. The participants revealed that there are a variety of ways instead of just one absolute model or way to live a creative life.

The obviousness of *Findings 4* and *5* were a give; still, it was interesting to observe the participants acknowledged intrinsic, as well as extrinsic factors and conditions. Furthermore, learning that certain extrinsic factors and conditions, depending on the context, could both inhibit or support an individual's practice seemed remarkable. This understanding reminds me of both the paradoxical nature and complexity of systems of educational organizations. According to Bolman and Deal (2013) and Heifetz (1994), educational organizations are paradoxical and complex because of people's diverse values, purposes, and unpredictable behavior. Furthermore, educational organizations are "open systems dealing with a changing, challenging, and erratic environment" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 30).

*Findings 6* and *7* were fascinating because they reflected the practice and purpose of an Artist Educator is greater than the traditional dissemination of arts knowledge and the cultivation of artistic skill development. The participants expressed that the practice of an Artist Educator extends beyond a traditional or standards-based visual arts education to account for a more holistic approach that addresses the moral, psychological, emotional, physical, as well as spiritual dimensions and experiences of individuals (Campbell & Simmons III, 2012). According to Ron Miller (as cited in Campbell & Simmons III, 2012, p. 77) "meaning emerges in context, in experience; holistic education is therefore essentially a responsiveness to the wholeness of experience as we live it in particular times and places." As a result, life lessons and embodied wisdom is imparted

through the creative processes of making art and engaging aesthetic experiences within the Artist Educator's studio art classroom.

Collectively, these seven findings confirmed that Artist Educators lead individuals on a personally transformative journey that is relational in nature, therefore, the practice of an Artist Educator could be considered a form of holistic education as it serves many aspects of an individual's life, including an individual's psychological, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. This understanding suggests an important distinction between the recognized practice of a visual arts educator and the practice of a visual Artist Educator.

The focus group participants acknowledged that visual arts educators are teachers of art, which means their practice primarily focuses on art appreciation, teaching artistic techniques and the creative use of materials within a traditional studio art classroom. During the study, a question emerged from the participants: "Does the word 'teacher' really imply what we do [as Artist Educators]?" In addition to believing that the value of the Artist Educator practice extends beyond the traditional art studio classroom and reflects a more personal, holistic educational approach to learning, the participants do not think the word 'teacher' or specific titles like, 'art teacher,' 'visual arts educator,' or even 'artist-teacher' effectively reflects or encompasses the totality of their identity or practice. As a result of reflecting upon and synthesizing all the seven findings, my insights justify the repurposing of the term Artist Educator and the consideration of a new paradigm for both a quality and holistic visual arts education practice in the twenty-first century: The Way of the Artist Educator.



### **A New Paradigm: The Way of the Artist Educator**

In response to the question posed by the participants regarding an appropriate title for their practice, I insist the term Artist Educator, which was introduced at the beginning of this study, remains an appropriate title that I have repurposed to capture the essence, being, and practice that has been reported in this study. Within the context of this study, the term Artist Educator intentionally uses capital letters “A” and “E” without a hyphen to denote equilibrium between the two evocative compound words. More importantly, this term signifies the fusion of an artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy as a way of life, one that is relational and fulfills the calling to both artistry and teaching. According to Thornton (2013), the repurposing of the term, Artist Educator, is “worthy of conceptual development” (p. 28) and further exploration because research has revealed alternative terms and conceptions of identity in regards to visual arts educators.

The term Artist Educator is similar to Daichendt’s (2010) idea of the artist-teacher, as inspired by Hans Hoffmann, in that “the actual concept of applying an aesthetic way of seeing and understanding is the central factor that requires embracing thinking deeply about being” (p. 22). I believe an Artist Educator, similar to an artist-teacher, is a philosophical term which fuses art making and teaching pedagogy into a relational practice. However, there are divergent features that distinguish an Artist Educator from an artist-teacher. For example, Hans Hofmann struggled with balancing both teaching art and art making. According to Daichendt (2010), Hofmann believed teaching art often took precedence over his art making and felt it created a “dangerous balance that could darken and cause the spirit of the artist-teacher to drain” (p. 125).

Contrary to Hofmann's beliefs, Artist Educators feel that neither art making or teaching art are more important than the other and the fusion of their artistic studio practice and their teaching pedagogy allows creativity to flourish into a unique practice and way of life.

Furthermore, unlike Daichendt's (2010) view, the Artist Educator's identity is not just the result of innate passion or aesthetic sensibilities and thinking. Instead, the Artist Educator's identity and practice comprises three unique characteristics: (a) relational being, (b) qualifications and teaching licensure, and lastly (c) leadership. These three characteristics distinguish and support this new paradigm for the consideration of a quality and holistic 21<sup>st</sup> Century K-12 Visual Arts Education.

In the following sections, I examine these three characteristics in relation to the findings from this study. The first characteristic I address is relational being.

### **Relational Being**

*Findings 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7* collectively revealed that the participants in this study believe the Artist Educator identity and sense of self is a construct of relational being and practice, similar to the conceptions presented by Gergen (2000, 2009) and Palmer (1990, 1993, 2000, 2004, 1997/2007). First, Gergen (2000) noted that identity is found in "the language of the self – of our internal states, processes, and characteristics" (p. 6), which is fundamentally intertwined with our relationships. Second, relational being is rooted in the awareness that knowledge and identity formation is co-created in relationships with others, thus it can "stimulate transformation in the practices of living" (Gergen, 2009, p. 201). As a result, Gergen (2009) contended that individuals "learn to have a voice of their

own” (p. 118), which expands the discourse of identity, allowing more diverse voices to be recognized, instead of the predominant “all male, white, and Western civilization” (p. 125) perspective of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

These concepts of identity and relational being resonated with Parker Palmer’s (1990, 1993, 2000, 2004, 1997/2007) views of wholeness, living authentically, and education as a spiritual journey. Palmer believed that an educator’s heart, mind, and spirit could work together to make a congruent life and transcendent educational experience through quality relationships and community. Palmer’s aim is achieved by having an awareness of the interconnectedness between teachers and students, as well as cultivating and sharing the wisdom possessed by each individual in a learning community. The following two quotes appropriately sum Parker Palmer’s (1997/2007) beliefs about individuals who embrace the courage to teach: (1) “We teach who we are.” and (2) The “more familiar we are with our inner terrain, the more surefooted our teaching – and living – becomes” (p. 6).

Thus, the way of the Artist Educator is living a creative life, where the fusion of an artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy fashions an authentically relational teaching and learning practice that is personally transformative. Furthermore, this characteristic is supported by the indication that each of the participants interviewed embrace a fundamental philosophical openness to the complexity of identity and paradoxical nature of being “both/and,” instead of the traditional perspective of “either/or.” Essentially, as Artist Educators embrace the fusion of their artistry and teaching, they make a conscious choice to be both Artist and Educator. Ultimately, this is

a deliberate act that counters the cultural stereotype coined by George Bernard Shaw that has plagued the profession of education, especially visual arts education, for years:

“Those who can, do; those who cannot, teach.”

The next section observed the second characteristic, qualifications and teaching licensure.

### **Qualifications and Teaching Licensure**

*Findings 2* and *7* supported the idea that being an Artist Educator requires an individual to have expertise in both the arts and education. When visual Artist Educators possess expertise in their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy, and then fuse these two elements (Robinson, 2009, 2013, 2015), they embody ideal knowledge, skills, and would be considered highly qualified by the US Department of Education. According to the US Department of Education (2017), highly qualified visual arts educators demonstrate subject-matter competency and a disposition for life-long learning by having teaching and learning experiences, a degree with a major in the subject(s) they teach, full licensure or advanced state certification, and/or a graduate degree. This concept is important for several reasons.

First, if visual arts educators are not practicing artists or engaging their personal creative practices, then they are not authentically exemplifying the ideal role model that actively inspires creative problem solvers and future artists (Pressfield, 2002; Foley, 2014). The participants in this study could not fathom engaging art in education without engaging in their artistic practice. As presented in the data, engaging a personal studio practice and making art is essential to making an Artist Educator feel whole. Second,

having both the expertise and supporting credentials distinguishes an essential quality of identity or being (Gergen, 2009), and practice desired for those engaged in K-12 Visual Arts Education. Visual arts educators who are not licensed or certified by state boards of education to teach would not be considered highly qualified. Subsequently, this presents a problem of quality, because student learning is directly impacted by the quality and experiences of their teachers (Foley, 2014; Robinson, 2015; Walker, 2013). Lastly, there is a sense of urgency as the purpose of education in the twenty-first century is evolving and departing from the traditional educational aims of imparting knowledge. Essentially, twenty-first century education is not interested in students reproducing what they know from the knowledge they have acquired. The focus of education in the twenty-first century is for students to demonstrate competency and “extrapolate from what they know and creatively use their knowledge in novel situations” (Schleicher, 2017). In order for this type of authentic educational experience to occur effectively, it requires qualified facilitation derived from both competence and experience, which is exactly what Artist Educators provide by the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy. Thus, the Way of the Artist Educator is one approach to ensuring authentic visual arts education experiences in the twenty-first century.

The following section explored the third and final characteristic, leadership.

### **Leadership**

Authentic leadership is found within the human heart (Palmer, 2000). All seven of the Findings in this study articulated a conceptualization of leadership that is innate to the Artist Educator and is reinforced through their authenticity. Leadership is considered the

mobilization of people to deal with complex issues (Heifetz, 1994), as well as the ability to influence others to “enable change, improvement, and the cultivation of new ideas” (Freedman, 2011). Artist Educators “aim at liberating the heart, their own and others, so that its powers can liberate [one’s] world” (Palmer, 2000, p. 76). For Artist Educators, the liberation espoused by Palmer is achieved through the transformative potential of creativity and the subversive nature of the arts.

Artist Educators possess the ability to lead with either formal or informal authority. For example, prior to my departure from my school district, I held two leadership positions of formal authority. I was the department head for my high school’s visual arts department, as well as the district-wide K-12 Visual Arts Curriculum Coordinator. Artist Educators who do not hold leadership positions of formal authority exercise informal leadership through the facilitation of learning within their studio art classroom and daily interactions with their students. An example of informal leadership is contextualized through Vanessa’s experience being the sole visual arts educator in her school building. In order to singularly advocate for the visual arts program and the needs of her students, as well as her own, Vanessa expressed, “It takes great bravery and the ability to stand alone to work in this environment.” Consequently, because Vanessa does not hold an administrative position of authority or “buy into” the educational system’s expectations, she is an informal leader that is considered a creative deviant (Heifetz, 1994). *Finding 4* illustrated the dispositions and personal abilities that are resources for Vanessa’s informal leadership. Ironically, *Findings 4* and *5* described the subversive

quality of the arts and the capacity of reframing, which contributes to Vanessa being viewed as a creative deviant within her school.

As in *Findings 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5*, the Artist Educator embodies this conception of leadership by engaging the subversive nature of the arts (Kohl and Oppenheim, 2012), exercising the capacity for reframing (Bolman & Deal, 2013), and the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy into a socially constructed meaning making experience and creative practice (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002, 2009; Greene 1978, 1995; Robinson, 2015). *Finding 6* further confirms that Artist Educators use the capacity of creativity and art to act as a social mediator to lead individuals from personal expression into cultural engagement (Freedman, 2003, 2011). Essentially, the leadership of Artist Educators embraces the complex demands of the twenty-first century and considers visual arts education to be conceived as a process for the personal construction and relational sharing of embodied wisdom, which is necessary for the transformation of lives (Gergen, 2009), as indicated in *Finding 7*.

In summary, the seven key findings from the study collectively conveyed that Artist Educators recognize the value of fusing artistry and teaching as a means for authentic and holistic learning, as well as cultivating both a creative and relational way of living that is personally transformative. The repurposing of the term, Artist Educator and presenting the new paradigm, Way of the Artist Educator, is the result of reflecting and synthesizing the findings of this study.

Three unique characteristics compose The Way of the Artist Educator paradigm: (a) relational being, (b) qualifications and teaching licensure, and (c) leadership. Given

the research concerning twenty-first education, I believe that these three characteristics support this new paradigm for a quality and holistic twenty-first century K-12 Visual Arts Education. Likewise, the term Artist Educator should be included in future discourses of identity as it pertains to visual arts educators in the postmodern era of the twenty-first century.

The next section presents implications and addresses the considerable potential of the resulting paradigm: The Way of the Artist Educator.

### **Implications**

This research study has the potential to make significant contributions to the field of education, especially Visual Arts Education. This study offers insights and practical examples of how Artist Educators fuse their studio practice and teaching pedagogy into one creative practice and authentic way of life. The findings and insights garnered from this study offer implications for pre-service educator development programs, visual arts education practice, in-service educator professional development, educational leaders, and scholarship.

### **Visual Arts Education Certification and Teacher Development Programs**

The findings of this study are valuable because they reveal the first-hand experiences and voices of individuals who offered insight and a deeper understanding of the beliefs, values, role, responsibilities, and behaviors characteristic of an Artist Educator. The knowledge acquired from the experience of the Artist Educators in this study can inform how we prepare pre-service educators to enter the classroom. This study



provided practical information that could also be useful for institutions of higher education.

The data acquired can help enhance the design of visual arts education programs. Specifically, the findings can assist institutions of higher education in their preparation to provide practical and relevant pre-service educator training. The participants in this study unanimously recollected how their own art education training and college experiences were extremely theoretical and not very practical. Subsequently, this made the reality of entering the profession of education more challenging and somewhat discouraging for the participants. During the interview phases, the following sentiments were echoed by all the participants, “I wish I had known” or “I wish somebody told me ....” The participants expressed how they felt like they were “missing” or “lacking” certain skills or experiences that, in hindsight, are vital and would have been extremely helpful to have prior to entering their own classroom. Examples of the skills described include learning how to create and work with a budget, working with certain materials, a deeper understanding of lesson planning and designing effective assessments, and in some instances, sustaining an artistic studio practice while engaging teaching.

Experiences the participants would have appreciated having more of concern what David Hawkins (as cited in Byrnes, Dalton, & Hope Dorman, 2018, p. xv) refers to as the “it, thou, and I of meaningful learning experiences in teaching.” Essentially, this represents the content of teaching (it), who is being taught (thou), and who is teaching (I) and these factors could be revealed through exploring a variety of instructional strategies, developing classroom management technique, learning more about cognition and

metacognition, as well as presenting tips and strategies to maintain an artistic studio practice. Thus, a sense of support for those heeding the call to become Artist Educators is offered from the participant stories and findings from this study which reflect practical implications for real life situations.

**Professional Development and Visual Arts Education Practice.**

The knowledge acquired from the experience of the Artist Educators in this study can also inform how we provide in-service educator professional development opportunities. The participants in this study expressed the importance of personal transformation (not only for their students, but themselves as well), through both meaningful learning experiences. It would be wise for school systems, institutions of higher education and other agencies that provide professional development for in-service educators to listen carefully to the wisdom, needs and desires of those who are on the frontline seeking opportunities for growth. Essentially, the findings from this study provide context to help increase control of the knowledge, and practices that have shaped the experiences and achievements of [Artist Educators] (Robinson, 2015). The insights from this study's findings will undoubtedly provide practical knowledge to enhance in-service educators.

Likewise, this same knowledge in the form of embodied wisdom can act as a source of renewal (Dalton, 2012; Wilcox, 2017) that inspires in-service visual arts educators who do not currently engage a personal studio practice to reclaim their intrinsic nature as artists to assume the identity and practice of an Artist Educator. Participants in the study indicated that finding the time to engage an artistic studio practice and make art is quite the challenge; however, as Jackson noted, "We accept this challenge because we have a need to make art." Kay insisted that it is about balancing priorities and more than just finding the time, it is about "making the time." Georgia further contended that one must "be structured about making artwork, even when you don't want to." This type of

advice from the participant experiences have the capacity to promote awareness and empathy, which is essential to fostering understanding, camaraderie, and hope to inspire a call to action to engage artmaking and artistic studio practice.

The Way of the Artist Educator is a conceivable paradigm for a quality and holistic twenty-first century K-12 Visual Arts Education. According to Campbell (2012): “Holistic educators, [such as Artist Educators], see the purpose of education as encouraging students to become intelligent, active, and engaged citizens of the classroom and the greater society, thereby preparing them to strive throughout their lives for social justice and ethical living” (p. 76). Essentially, the Artist Educator practice achieves these educational principles by providing both “artistic (making) and aesthetic (viewing) experiences... [which help individuals] develop 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, such as creative and critical thinking, and essential human qualities, such as sensory awareness, emotional receptivity, and empathy” (Campbell & Simmons III, 2012, p. 37).

### **Implications for Educational Leaders**

Educational leaders in formal positions of authority within school systems, especially district and school-wide administrators, have both a professional and ethical responsibility as instructional leaders. On a professional level, educational leaders can cultivate educational excellence by fostering the conditions for quality instructional practices (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). Furthermore, on an ethical level, educational leaders can support the identity (Palmer, 1997; 1997/2007) and the professional capacity of their teachers (Bastos & Zimmerman, 2015; Bryk et al., 2015; Campbell & Simmons III, 2012). Educational leaders who

support the identity and professionalism of their teachers strategically promote high quality instruction for student learning and educational excellence within their respective school systems.

### **Implications for Scholarship**

The motivation to fuse artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy is not limited to the visual arts. Although this study specifically focused on visual arts, the information and findings are relevant to educators of the performing arts such as music, dance, and drama.

I also argue that, relational being, qualifications and teaching licensure, and leadership, the three defining characteristics forming The Way of the Artist Educator, can be transferrable to other academic domains. Inspired by Elliott Eisner's (2009) research for improving the quality of education, The Way of the Artist Educator acts as both a supplement to established paradigms, as well as a strategic paradigm shift for the arts to re-conceptualize the aims, as well as conduct of education in the twenty-first century.

Moreover, the findings from this study challenge the cultural stereotype surrounding visual arts educators, "Those who can, do; those who cannot, teach." The acquired perspectives of the Artist Educators in this study exposed the various reasons that guide their decisions to live a creative life, which centers around the fusion of their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy. Essentially, the findings revealed that individuals who are both adept as practicing artists and effective educators choose to embrace the identity of Artist Educator because they desire "both/and," instead of "either/or," and they cannot imagine their lives being fulfilled any other way.

The following section presents further considerations and recommendations for future research.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based upon what I have learned from all the data and emergent findings of this study, the following are my four recommendations for future research: (1) further examine why some visual arts educators do not engage art making or studio practice, (2) replicate the research to expand the sample size and population, (3) considerations for educational leaders, and (4) replicate this study with other art disciplines.

### **Further Examine Why Visual Arts Educators Do Not Make Art**

The idea of visual arts educators not making art or engaging in an artistic studio practice mystified the participants in this study. Moreover, findings in this study either corroborate or oppose some of the research findings from previous studies that have been done on visual arts educator identities and practice (Hatfield, Montana, & Deffenbaugh, 2006; Thornton, 2011; Walker, 2013). For example, according to Hatfield et al. (2006) “Lacking the time, and/or courage to create and show artwork” (p. 47) accounted for why some visual arts educators do not make art. Whereas in this study, issues such as lack of time and courage did not dissuade an Artist Educator from making art or engaging in their artistic studio practice. I recommend that further examination of these and other reasons why visual arts educators do not engage their own studio art practice or make art would continue to be a worthwhile endeavor towards making sense of identity issues, as well as examining factors that affect the quality of educational experiences for the twenty-first century.

**Replicate Research with an Expanded Sample Size**

I also recommend replicating this study using a larger sample of participants that spans other states and regions within the United States. Although I intentionally use a small sample size and individuals from the states of Maine and New Hampshire to create a focus group to gain individual perspectives that capture the Artist Educator experience, expanding the sampling method could be more meaningful. A diverse array of certified and practicing visual arts educators exist across the country. The comparative data that could be acquired may offer alternative insights to the identity of Artist Educators, as well as inform visual arts education and teacher preparation programs in colleges and universities. Thus, future research to replicate these results using a greater sample size has the potential to offer greater validity for the results found in this study.

**Considerations for Educational Leaders**

A concern identified by participants in this study, as well as within the literature (Hatfield et al., 2006; Thornton, 2011; Walker, 2013) was that colleagues and educational leaders (i.e. principals, superintendents) disregarded the identity and significance of visual arts educators having an artistic studio practice. As a result of understanding the significance of the Way of the Artist Educator, especially as it relates to the quality of visual arts education practice, further research addressing this concern, specifically educational leaders' perceptions of the identity of visual arts educators and the significance of visual arts education might offer some valuable insight. The insight obtained could prove useful for the practices of educational leaders who are responsible

for the quality of instruction and the hiring of highly qualified educators. In addition, the insight could also be of value to colleges and universities that train educational leaders.

### **Replicate Research to Include Other Arts Disciplines**

My final recommendation for future research is to replicate this study using other art disciplines, such as music, dance, and drama. Since all art forms center around creativity and self-expression, the transferability of this study to other artistic disciplines is a natural extension. The arts and artistic processes are heralded as essential ways of knowing because of their ability to produce evidence and evocatively communicate results (McNiff, 2013). Since the arts are a way of knowing, it will be very interesting to observe the variety of narratives and artistic expressions, self-portraits in particular, that can be created using music, dance, and drama. The use of artistic inquiry and arts-based research methods is gaining momentum in the scholarly field of social sciences and holds great potential for qualitative research practices. Considering this recommendation provides the following three benefits:

1. Replicating this research using various arts disciplines provides greater validity to the original study.
2. Engaging in arts-based research further validates artistic inquiry as a way of knowing truth.
3. Engaging in arts-based research furthers the aims of social science scholarship.

### **Final Reflections: The Way of the Artist Educator**

Conducting this research has been a richly affirming and enlightening experience. As a burgeoning researcher-scholar, autoethnography as a methodology resonated with my identity and practice as a self-identified Artist Educator. In many ways



autoethnography is a way of living (Adams et al., 2015), similar to that of The Way of the Artist Educator. Through this autoethnographic research study, I was able to use artistic inquiry and personal experience to highlight embodied knowledge to illustrate how truth can be explored through both personal and empirical narratives. I was able to contextualize, explore, and understand my experiences in relation to the experiences of others. As a result, I was able to describe and critique the sense-making processes and cultural experiences of Artist Educators in order to promote greater social awareness and inspire educational improvement. Specifically, I wrote about both personal and communal experiences so that individuals outside of academia could more easily understand the nature of Artist Educators and better appreciate their role in educational spheres. Conversely, the research findings can be vital to the development of constructive twenty-first century pre-service visual arts education preparatory programs, as well as significant for professional development opportunities for in-service educators.

Returning to the focus of my research, while I am validated by the findings from this study, I did experience some cognitive dissonance when I learned that the Artist Educator participants had different understandings of what a “calling to a vocation” is, as well as some of them did not believe living a creative life is something that can be taught. In the end, the reciprocity of the autoethnographic methodology presented revelations that expanded my perception and further developed my appreciation for the complexity of individuality.

At the heart of this study is the wisdom gleaned from embodied knowledge and reflection of personal experiences. Maintaining authenticity to my identity and practice as

an Artist Educator, I conclude this dissertation by providing additional examples of my artistic practice for meaning-making and the documentation of my doctoral journey. During each of the three years of this program, I have engaged in art making to both process and express my learning. As a result, I have created a triptych, which is a set of three interrelated abstract watercolor images that are reflective of the theme of doctoral scholarship. Figure 3 presents my abstract watercolor triptych and a detailed image of each individual painting can be found in Appendix J.

Figure 3. Strickland Doctoral Journey Triptych



Each painting panels represents each year of my doctoral journey and is intended to be viewed from left to right. The three, large abstract watercolor paintings are roughly 28" x 36" and used the following elements of art and principles of design: colors, lines, shapes, value, patterns and movement. The white globular shapes within each painting

are expressive of the “pearls of wisdom,” which are formed and transformed through interacting with the other elements, or experiences within life.

The first-year doctoral journey painting is entitled, *Reverence and Shame: A Sociocultural Perspective* and documents my understanding of how epistemological and sociocultural factors contributed to my evolution as an Artist Educator and Researcher. I chose to visually symbolize my experiences, as well as the emotions and thoughts surrounding these experiences, in an effort to communicate to others the learning that connects content and context. Engaging with visual arts promoted my growth, self-expression and self-actualization to encourage authenticity and foster arts education as the practice of individual freedom and transformation. This process and experience is best described through the prolific words of Maxine Greene (1995), “Seeking clarity and authenticity in the face of thoughtfulness” (p.126).

The second-year doctoral journey painting is entitled, *Change is a Process: Understanding Systems Thinking* and documents my learning about educational systems; adaptive leadership; and the “inner, other, and outer” (Goleman & Senge, 2014, p. 9) dimensions related to the process of change. At first, I struggled with cognitive dissonance as I learned about the complexity associated with leadership and educational systems. However, throughout the process of my doctoral program, as my thinking was stretched within each course, a deeper understanding of the interconnection between concepts of change, leadership, and context emerged. My perspective and appreciation for educational leadership practice as a catalyst for the improvement of teaching and learning was transformed when I realized that leading is both a noun and a verb (Western,

2008/2013), exemplifying the cultivation of integrative and systems thinking habits, such as doing, reflecting, collaborating and questioning (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Goleman & Senge, 2014; Heifetz, 1994; Kotter, 2012; Martin, 2009; Wagner & Kegan, 2006).

The third-year doctoral journey painting is entitled, *Fusion: The Way of the Artist Educator* and documents my specific learning from engaging autoethnography and this research study. As Hickman (2010) noted, “authentic self-expression entails genuine individualized responses to learning” (p. 129). This painting is a literal reflective visual expression that symbolically represents the inward and outward practice of an Artist Educator as they fuse their artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy into one creative way of life. The result of fusing artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy creates an alignment of purpose for an individual’s heart, mind, body, and spirit.

I hope this study inspires other Artist Educators and scholars to lead educational transformation endeavors by contributing their wisdom and experience to the field of visual arts education. As Kohl and Oppenheim (2012) observed:

We have learned that the arts inspire a profound and personal self-confrontation on a multiplicity of levels: physical, vocal, imaginative, emotional, and intellectual. They also inspire community and the skills needed to function and be creative with and for other people. The rigors of artistic discipline lead organically toward self-transformation. They help break down received and self-inflicted stereotypes by opening both the mind and heart. They produce curiosity and engagement with life, with self and others. (p. xxiii-xxiv)

Furthermore, the examination of personal experiences through qualitative research approaches, such as autoethnography and arts-based methods, honors an individual's voice and provides a realistic perspective that can help balance the predominantly theoretical discourses for educational improvement. It has been an invaluable experience for me to discover new meaning, by not only engaging, but integrating my artistic studio practice with autoethnography. I strongly encourage others to explore their own creativity, artistry, and personal narratives for the profound wisdom that may be realized, as well as imparted to others in order to create quality practices and holistic arts educational experiences for the twenty-first century and beyond.

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## APPENDICES

*Appendix A. Email Letter to Participants*

Dear Artist-Educator,

As a practicing artist-educator and doctoral student, I am interested in examining the practices and professional identities of Visual Arts Educators. Specifically, I want to explore the significance of fusing artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy of K-12 Visual Arts Educators who identify themselves as Artist-Educators.

You are invited to participate in a research study that will report the perceptions of visual artist-educators regarding their beliefs about what drives the synergistic nature of their practice, the ways their studio practice and teaching pedagogy enhance student learning, and the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of their professional practice. You were selected based on your professional reputation and experiences as an artist and educator. The results from this research will be used as part of my doctoral dissertation and may be submitted to the National Art Education Association (NAEA) for publications regarding contemporary research in art education. There is significant potential for this study to influence the professional preparation of future K-12 Visual Arts Educators, as well as serve the advancement of arts education.

The research study consists of two parts: (a) a focus group interview, and (b) art-making session and analysis. The focus group interview will take 1-3 hours on a designated date and the art-making session and analysis will last between 1-3 hours and will be individually scheduled. All aspects of the study will utilize audio/visual recording devices to ensure accuracy of the data collected. If you decide to participate in this research study, simply reply to this email message with the consent completed appropriately. The attached consent form outlines your voluntary participation and willingness to allow me to publish a photographic image of your original artwork that is created during the study. During the process of this study, all precautions will be taken to maintain confidentiality and participant anonymity. This will be done through the use of coding techniques typical for qualitative data analysis. I will be the only one collecting and analyzing the data from the study and once the study is completed, the notes and all related materials collected (other than the original artwork) will be kept safe in a non-accessible password protected computer for 5 years and then deleted and/or destroyed.

I understand personally the demands of a K-12 Visual Arts Educator, and it is with this in mind that I respectfully ask for your assistance and cooperation in helping me complete this study. Please read the attached consent form and consider participating by responding to this email. Do not hesitate to call me (603-531-9913) if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible!

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Strickland  
Lesley University Doctoral Candidate

*Appendix B. Informed Consent Form*

<p><b>Dissertation Research:</b>  <b><i>Way of the Artist Educator:</i></b>  <b><i>Understanding the Fusion of Artistic Studio Practice and Teaching Pedagogy of K-12 Visual Arts Educators.</i></b></p>		
<p>This study, designed and facilitated by Christopher M. Strickland, is being conducted as part of the requirements of Lesley University's Educational Leadership Doctoral Program. The purpose of my research is to explore the significance of fusing the artistic studio practice and teaching pedagogy of K-12 Visual Arts Educators who identify themselves as Artist-Educators. There is significant potential for this study to influence the professional preparation of future K-12 Visual Arts Educators, as well as the advancement of arts education as a profession.</p>		
<p><b>CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION</b></p>		
<p>The research study consists of two parts: (a) a focus group interview, and (b) art-making session and analysis. The focus group interview will take 1-3 hours on a designated date and the art-making session and analysis will last between 1-3 hours and will be individually scheduled. All aspects of the study will utilize audio/visual recording devices to ensure accuracy of the data collected. During the process of this study, all precautions will be taken to maintain confidentiality and participant anonymity through the use of coding techniques typical for qualitative data analysis. I will be the only one collecting and analyzing the data from the study. The data collected (other than the original artwork) will be kept safe in a non-accessible password protected computer for 5 years, at which point all the data will be destroyed. If you decide to participate in this research study, simply reply to this email message with the consent completed appropriately.</p>		
<p><b>INFORMED CONSENT FORM</b></p>		
<p>Participating in this research study is completely voluntary and there is no compensation for participating in this interview. The benefit of participating in this research is the opportunity to provide information useful in understanding and explaining peer dialogue as a resource for K-12 Visual Arts Educators. There are no known risks associated with participation in this project. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may cease participation at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.</p> <p>You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at any time before or during this research. The researcher's contact information, as well as the researcher's senior advisor's and Lesley University's IRB contact information appears below. There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at <a href="mailto:irb@lesley.edu">irb@lesley.edu</a></p> <p>By replying to this email and inserting an "X" next the appropriate statements, you are giving electronic consent to participate in this research study. A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep.</p>		
<p>Thank you for your consideration to participate in this research study!</p>		
<p>___ I agree to participate in this study. ___ I do not agree to participate in this study.  I allow ___ / ___ do not allow a photograph of my self-portrait to be published in this study.</p>		
<p>Sincerely,  <b><i>Christopher M. Strickland</i></b></p>		
<p>Christopher M. Strickland  PhD Candidate  Lesley University  <a href="mailto:stricklandcms@gmail.com">stricklandcms@gmail.com</a>  <a href="mailto:cstrick2@lesley.edu">cstrick2@lesley.edu</a>  (603) 531-9913</p>	<p>Dr. Francine Jennings  Senior Advisor  Lesley University  <a href="mailto:fjennings@lesley.edu">fjennings@lesley.edu</a></p>	<p>Robyn Cruz  IRB Chair  Lesley University  <a href="mailto:irb@lesley.edu">irb@lesley.edu</a></p>

*Appendix C. Autoethnographic Reflection Protocol***Data Collection Phase 1:  
Self-Reflection / Narrative**

Using the following three guiding research questions as prompts:

**Guiding Research Question #1:** *What motivates and inspires Artist-Educators to use simultaneously their studio practice to influence their teaching pedagogy as well as use their teaching pedagogy to influence their studio practice?*

**Guiding Research Question #2:** *What are the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of Artist-Educators?*

**Guiding Research Question #3:** *How do Artist Educators perceive the fusion of their studio practice and teaching pedagogy to be impacting their creative and classroom practices?*

The researcher reflected upon and wrote about his personal experiences as an Artist Educator.

In addition to the guiding research questions, the researcher reviewed personal journals, previous scholarship, and letters from former students to prompt further memory and help articulate responses to 16 years of service as a visual arts educator.

The autoethnographic responses were typed and the data was used to establish initial codes and generate themes for the study. The autoethnographic codes and themes were analyzed and compared with the emerging codes and themes from the participant data.

*Appendix D. Focus Group Interview Protocol***Data Collection Phase 2:  
Artist-Educator Focus Group Interview Protocol****Welcome and Introduction:**

- Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group for my dissertation Research study. As you know, I am interested in talking with people who identify as Artist-Educators. The purpose of this focus group is to gather information about how you, as artist-educators perceive your identity and how the synergy between your studio practice and teaching pedagogy influences your practice, as well as impacts student learning. There are two phases to this study, an interactive focus group interview and art-making session and analysis. Phase one is the interactive focus group interview. This should take between 1-3 hours.
- Before we begin today, it is necessary for me to obtain your consent to participate. I also am collecting demographic data that will be used in my analysis. All of this information will be kept confidential. Please review the following information and sign the consent form if you agree to participate today. Your consent also indicates your awareness that I will be recording this session today and gives permission to be recorded.
- There are no right or wrong answers to focus group questions. I want to hear from each of you about your experiences and the ways in which they may be similar and different. I hope that everyone will feel comfortable to speak openly even if your opinions or experiences are different than others. I ask that all of you agree to listen while others are speaking and that you maintain confidentiality about group members' responses in this group today. Is that acceptable to everyone?
- Are there any questions?

**Opening / Introductory Questions (round robin):**

- We'll start by introducing ourselves and sharing some background information with one another. Please share the following information:
  - Your Name
  - School and grade level(s) you teach/taught
  - The classes you teach/taught
  - How long you have been teaching/taught
  - What inspired you to become a visual arts educator
- Why do you consider yourself an Artist Educator?
  - How does this differ from an arts educator?

**Discussion Questions:**

**Guiding Research Question #1:** *What motivates and inspires Artist-Educators to use simultaneously their studio practice to influence their teaching pedagogy, as well as use their teaching pedagogy to influence their studio practice?*

- What makes you a practicing artist? Educator?
- What motivates you to use your studio practice in your teaching?
- What have you learned from combining your skillsets and practices?
- What are the benefits of engaging art making for your teaching practice?
- What are your thoughts about the following statement: “Teaching art is different from teaching one how to be an artist.”

**Guiding Research Question #2:** *What are the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of Artist-Educators?*

- What helps you to be effective?
- What inhibits your effectiveness?
- How do you feel your role and position is valued by the students, fellow teachers, administration, parents, and the community?
- What supports/resources are in place in your school and/or community for you as an arts educator?
- What do you love about your job?
- What frustrates you about your job?
- Do you have to advocate for your program/beliefs? How do you advocate for your program?
- What are the myths surrounding your position or arts education that you have to dispel?

**Guiding Research Question #3:** *How do Artist Educators perceive the fusion of their studio practice and teaching pedagogy to be impacting their creative and classroom practices?*

- How has your art practice influenced your teaching? Please share some specific examples.
- How has your teaching practice influenced your art practice? Please share some specific examples.
- What impact do you think your role and practice as an artist-educator has on your students?

**Clarifying Questions (as needed):**

- “I want to make sure I understand; can you explain more?”
- “Can you give me an example or two?”

**Wrap-up / Ending Question:**

- Thank you for your participation today. I greatly appreciate it! Before we end our session today, is there anything else you would like to add that you did not have the opportunity to do so?

*Appendix E. Artistic Expression Protocol***Data Collection Phase 3:  
Artist-Educator Artistic Expression Protocol: “Self-Portrait”****Welcome and Introduction:**

- Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this research project. In this session, I will have you create a visual expression. With your permission, I will photograph your original artwork for inclusion in the study. Please know that your participation is voluntary.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Artistic Expression Prompt: “Self-Portrait”**

- Using the provided art materials, and any materials you brought, please create an original work of art that specifically reflects your identity as a ‘Artist-Educator’ and would be considered a “self-portrait.”

Any artistic style and form of representation can be used. Consider the following prompts as you engage this art-making process. (These prompts are connected to the same guiding research questions that were used in the focus group interview session.)

**Guiding Research Question #1:** *What motivates and inspires Artist-Educators to use simultaneously their studio practice to influence their teaching pedagogy, as well as use their teaching pedagogy to influence their studio practice?*

- Who you are (Thoughts, feelings, values, beliefs, perceptions)

**Guiding Research Question #2:** *What are the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of Artist-Educators?*

- What you do (The synergy of your studio practice and teaching pedagogy)

**Guiding Research Question #3:** *How do Artist Educators perceive the fusion of their studio practice and teaching pedagogy to be impacting their creative and classroom practices?*

- Why you do what you do (Significance, relevance, purpose)



*Appendix F. Artistic Expression Analysis Protocol*

**Data Collection Phase 4:  
Artistic Expression Analysis Protocol**

**Artistic Expression Analysis:**

- I would like to look at your “self-portrait” and engage in an analysis with you regarding the creative process, the decisions you made and its meaning – through the lenses of both personal/subjective and interpretative / objective. We will proceed to analyze the work based upon each of the above lenses using the following strategy: Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) method.
- To engage this analysis, I will use the VTS method developed by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine (2013). The following questions will guide our analysis discussion for each of the above prompts:
  - What’s going on in this image?
  - What do you see that makes you think / say that?
  - What more can we find to support our ideas?

*Appendix G. Individual Follow-Up Interview Protocol***Data Collection Phase 5:  
Individual Follow-Up Interview Protocol****Welcome and Introduction:**

- Thank you again for agreeing to be interviewed for this research project. This meeting is a follow-up to our focus group interview. Please know that your participation is voluntary and the decision to answer questions or skip any questions is completely up to you.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

***GRQ 1: What motivates and inspires Artist Educators to use simultaneously their studio practice to influence their teaching pedagogy, as well as use their teaching pedagogy to influence their studio practice?***

1. Do you think being an Artist Educator is a calling?
2. What is the significance of fusing your personal art practice with your teaching practice?
3. Why is art and art making so important to you?
4. How do you live a creative life? (Please give some examples)

***GRQ 2: What are the factors and conditions that inhibit and support the effectiveness of the synergistic practices of Artist Educators?***

5. What are the dispositions/characteristics (based on yourself and experiences with other art teachers) that are defining for an Artist Educator?

***GRQ 3: How do Artist Educators perceive the fusion of their studio practice and teaching pedagogy to be impacting their creative and classroom practices?***

6. Can you provide a couple of examples that illustrate how you have impacted student learning?
7. Georgia mentioned teaching "life lessons"... do you think you teach life lessons beyond just art? What are life lessons and which ones do you think you impart to your students? (This could be similar to #6, but I would like some specific context or examples to define life lessons!)

*Appendix H. Additional Follow-Up Interview Protocol***Follow-Up Interview Protocol****(As needed)****Welcome and Introduction:**

- Thank you again for agreeing to be interviewed for this research project. This meeting is another follow-up to our focus group interview and individual follow-up interview. If needed, I will ask you to provide information about those experiences and clarify comments you made during the focus group session. Please know that your participation is voluntary and the decision to answer questions or skip any questions is completely up to you.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Focus Group Interview Reviewed:**

- The following is your response or comments to the question \_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me more about this idea and what you mean?

*Appendix I. Focus Group Artistic Expressions: “Self-Portraits”*



Artist Educator Self-Portrait: Christopher





Artist Educator Self-Portrait: Kay





Artist Educator Self-Portrait: Georgia



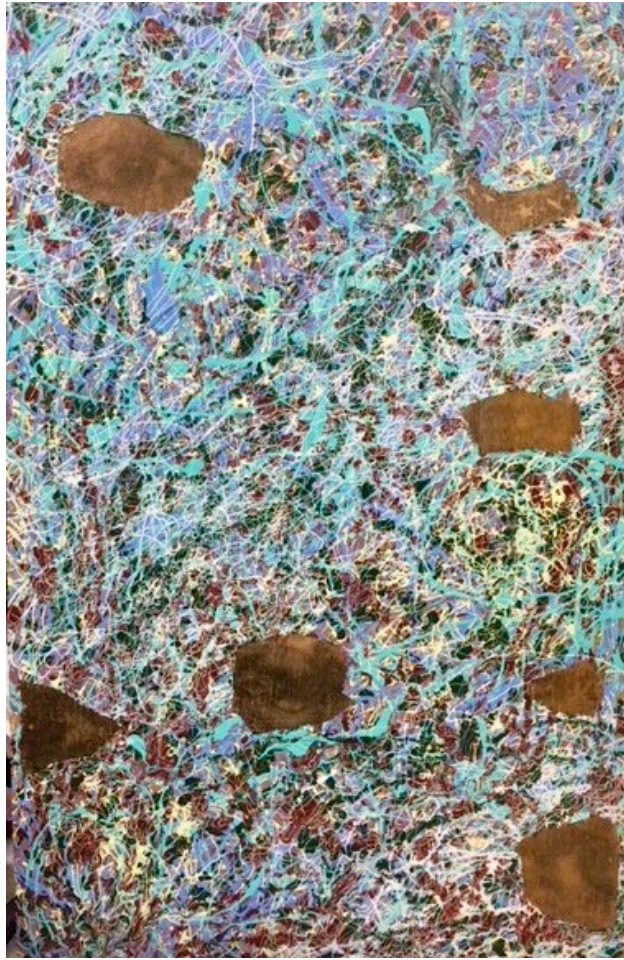
Artist Educator Self-Portrait: Vanessa





Artist Educator Self-Portrait: Lexi





Artist Educator Self-Portrait: Jackson

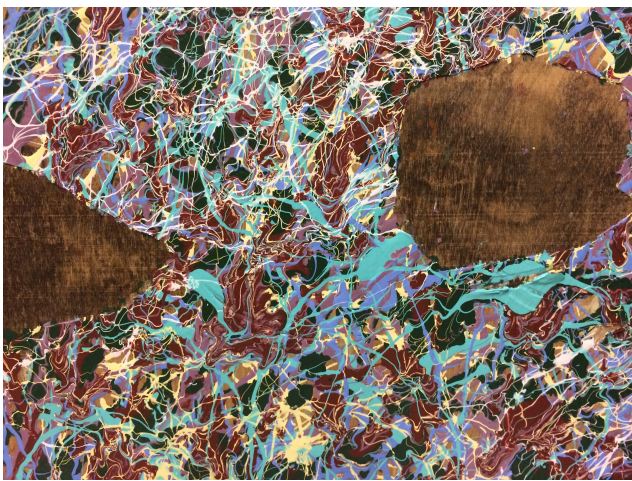


Image Detail

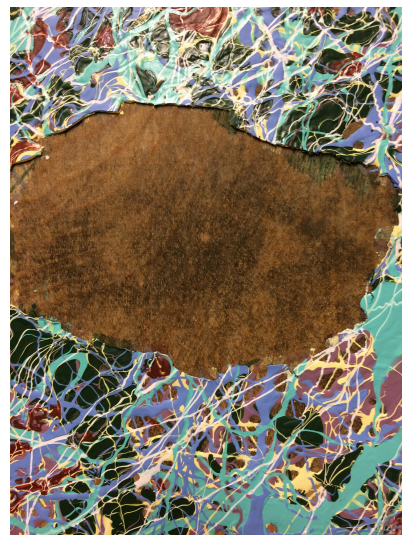


Image Detail



*Appendix J. Strickland Original Artwork*

Doctoral Journey Triptych



Year 1



Year 2



Year 3



Year 1 (2015-2016) Doctoral Journey: *Reverence and Shame: A Sociocultural Perspective*





Year 2 (2016-2017) Doctoral Journey: *Change is a Process: Understanding Systems Thinking*





Year 3 (2017-2018) Doctoral Journey: *Fusion: The Way of the Artist Educator*