

TEACHING IS MY ART NOW



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The University of Sydney

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ABSTRACT

This arts-informed inquiry is grounded in the lived experiences of five self-proclaimed artists including the researcher, who have turned to careers in teaching at varying stages of their lives. The stories of their transitions and evolving identities as both artists and teachers provide the investigative focus for this study. Although this research is relevant to teachers more generally, it specifically focuses on those who have chosen to teach Visual Arts.

Particularly suited to a postmodern, arts-informed inquiry, the diverse forms of knowing that create our everyday experiences are acknowledged. The researcher became the *bricoleur* who collaged the individual stories of the first year artist-teachers into an integrated work of art. This constructivist approach included the use of visual imagery to transcend linguistic description. Through artworks, photographs, a self-narrative and novelette, the multiple ways these early career Visual Arts teachers came to understand themselves and their journeys are explored.

This study has the potential to inform novice teachers of the transitions they may experience as they enter the teaching profession. Possible challenges, including the recognition that idealised beliefs might be traded in for more realistic representations, are discussed along with the notions of teaching as an art and the concept of resilience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was a leap of faith to leave my life, family and pets behind in the USA in order to pursue my dream of living overseas and writing a PhD. Only with the consistent encouragement and support of those around me could such a grand journey be made possible.



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To the happy memories
of
WILMA AND CHARLIE

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PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

Once upon a time *there lived an artist who thought it would be a good idea to enter a career in teaching. So she did. Four years later she left her Visual Arts teaching position to move across the world and research early career artist-teachers. That artist was me, Denise Stanley, and this is the story of my research.*

When our stories provide opportunity for vicarious experience, readers extend their own memories, feeding into the process of awareness and understanding. Consequently, the underlying purpose of this study is to assist readers in the construction of knowledge to understand the challenging transitions to a career in teaching. By informing novice teachers of the possible challenges they may encounter and encouraging resiliency through the most difficult times, this text aims to increase retention rates amongst those who enter the teaching profession. Although this study often pertains to teachers in general, specific attention is directed towards those who teach Visual Arts.

This arts-informed inquiry urges all readers, whether they consider themselves artists or not, to tap into their intuitive and creative dimensions so as to understand early career Visual Arts teaching in a more holistic way (Cole & Knowles, 2000). Responding to a call for educational researchers to utilise different art forms, including various narrative forms to develop what has been hailed as a new social science paradigm (Finley, 2005), this postmodern text describes and analyses lives within their respective contexts while seeking greater levels of authenticity within the research process.

Although this study explores alternative approaches to researching by using artistic, literary and nontraditional forms of expression, it is also grounded in the academic and professional world and occasionally draws from tradition. In the Aristotelian tradition, effective stories are comprised of a beginning, a middle and an end. Today's postmodern climate may question such categorisations but being a bricoleur, I have purposefully

collaged a wide range of interconnected methods to help explain the worlds of experience that are being studied. Therefore, the story of my research has a traditional beginning, middle and end.

The Beginning is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the theoretical background that underpins the study. However, I consider Chapter 2 the official ‘beginning’ to the story of my research. Encouraged by Richardson (2000), I accept and nurture my own voice within this text. By ‘beginning’ with a self-narrative, I could more easily comprehend the early career transitions that I myself, as a first year artist-teacher experienced. In addition, readers could come to know some of my character and thereby better understand my perspective as the writer-researcher for the remainder of this thesis. In subsequent chapters, my experiences could then also be drawn upon. The self-narrative provides a strong authentic pathway that contributes to the realness of the study while assuring the readers that the writer-researcher has ‘been there.’

Chapters 3 and 4 provide a review of the related literature regarding the transitions of early career teachers with specific attention directed towards the unique challenges concerning Visual Arts education. I also demonstrate why the use of narrative is the most practical and natural means to explore the artist-teachers’ identity development. By looking at past studies and linking them to my experience and to current situations, this study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What transitional challenges do first year qualified Visual Arts teachers experience?
2. In what ways do artists’ identities change when they enter teaching careers?

Chapter 5 comprises an overview of and rationale for the research methodology used to answer the proposed questions. Particular methods are employed so that readers can hear and visualise the participants’ experiences and interpretations. These methods may be defined as ambiguous and partial, tentative or even contradictory. But Barone (2001) verifies such an epistemological stance is quite pertinent to a project of educational inquiry where the role and purposes are to enhance meaning rather than reduce uncertainty.

Chapter 6 is presented as *The Middle* of the research story. By looking closely at the intricate identities of just a few individuals within a community, readers are offered an

insight into the complexity of the collective (Cole & Knowles, 2001a). The novelette, which encompasses this entire section, tells how the research participants adapted their prior knowledge, skills and attitudes to their new practicing situations.

The constructed artworks that relate to my data collection are included in this section. These collages correspond with the development of evidence as it is presented through the novelette. By physically constructing, yet metaphorically building an overall image of the year and images of the research participants' identities, I was able to emphasise personal meanings drawn from their cultures and backgrounds while bringing the disparate aspects of the internal-personal and external-contextual to a common place (Finley, 2001). What results is an artefact for broader resonance (Vaughan, 2005). These collaged artworks carry their own voice. They offer psychological and emotional unity to an interpretive experience by giving visual representation to its linguistic components (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a). An underlying purpose of arts-informed inquiry is to reach audiences beyond the academy (Cole, 2005). As such, each collage, alongside several other artworks that I created during the time of writing this thesis, were publicly displayed in a solo art exhibition.

Following the novelette, the analysis and conclusion compose *The End* to the story of my research. Chapter 7 addresses the research questions where our actions and self-understandings are interpreted. An analysis of the participants' responses to the question, "Is teaching a form of art?" and their advice to future teachers is offered. In conclusion, Chapter 8 acknowledges that this journey has only provided some beginnings in its exploration of such profound questions.

People, including those beyond the academy, who have had or are looking to experience similar situations to those of this study's participants are in the best position to understand and benefit from this research. This arts-informed inquiry has the potential to reach a wide audience and influence the thinking of policy makers, politicians, legislators and other key educational decision makers (Cole & Knowles, 2008). Much can be learnt from the rich data of life stories. This study aims to create the conditions for authentic, deep and emotional understanding that enables readers to weave themselves into the experiences that have been interpreted. When visions are created from the story's plot, readers may find that new meanings are constructed and values and outlooks are changed. When this

occurs, the purposes of this research which I consider a work of art, have been served (Barone & Eisner, 1997). This thesis reveals the essential value of learning experiences through art to further communicate ideas of Visual Arts education. Knowing the past can help us understand the present and thereby provide direction for the future (Flood, 2005).

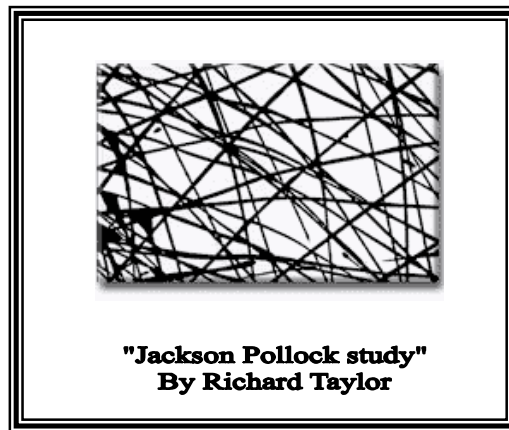


The Beginning

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

Humans naturally ask the eternal questions of what is there to know and how can one go about knowing it. These questions have continued to appear in new guises throughout recorded time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).



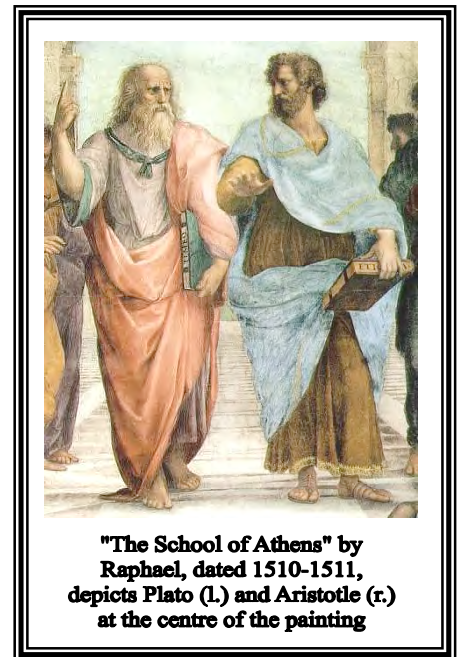
To metaphorically describe over 2000 years of philosophical debate, I turn to the art of the Abstract Expressionist, Jackson Pollock. In the painting pictured above, physicist Richard Taylor (1998) experiments with Pollock's technique. This painting represents the rejection of traditional methods as it was created not with a brush, but with a drip trajectory pendulum. In its development, a pendulum swung and recorded its motion by dripping paint onto a canvas positioned below. When left to swing on its own, the pendulum followed a predictable pattern, however the artist occasionally knocked the pendulum to purposely disturb its consistency. This first chapter follows a pendulum of its own to provide a *very* brief overview of the philosophical development that preceded this thesis.

The Pendulum Swings

The first known recorded analysis of the concept of western knowledge, depicted by Plato (427-347B.C.), saw knowledge as true belief properly evidenced (Armstrong, 1973). Plato believed there was an ontological and an epistemological descent from intellection to imagination which entailed movement away from being to becoming and away from truth to error and falsehood (Eden, 1986). He identified the activity of the mimetic artist with

the false world of images and the imagination. But as time would tell, not all were in agreement with Plato, and so a philosophical debate began.

Plato's student, Aristotle (384-322B.C.) responded to his teacher's position by emphasising the role of probability in fiction (the false world) but minimised its association with the imagination. Due to an infinite variability associated with human action, which served as an instrument in fictional construction, Aristotle argued that outcomes could not be predicted with complete accuracy. Appropriately then, Aristotelian probability became empirical rather than mathematical, qualitative rather than quantitative and relied less on calculation and more on experience (Eden, 1986). The pendulum in the quest for certainty had begun to swing.



Classical philosophy following Aristotle became practical in that it emphasised the art of living. By the 16th Century European Renaissance, interest in qualitative particularities to build human knowledge was flourishing (Eisner, 2002). But with the Age of Enlightenment in the 17th Century, the pendulum had shifted away from the vogue of Aristotelian philosophy and moved back towards the Platonic side of the continuum. A desire to rediscover the orderly and the objectifying consciousness of the Enlightenment gave birth to the “modern traditions of mechanism, empiricism, rationalism, materialism, secularism, scientism and positivism” (Gablik, 1991:11). This positivist paradigm would come to dominate social science investigation and, as a result, academic and funding agencies would trust quantitative research methods as *the* way for investigating educational practice (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

With the unfolding of the 20th century, the pendulum was knocked causing its consistent pattern to become disturbed. The presumed solid demarcations between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ and between ‘true’ and ‘imagined’ began to blur (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). German philosopher and sociologist, Jürgen Habermas (1968) argued everything that could become the object of rigorous science should count as fact. Therefore this delimitation of science, that positivism sought to secure, led some philosophers to question how science itself

could and should be defined. According to Habermas (1968), science was directed at discovering facts, but facts in principle were infinite and could never be totally understood.

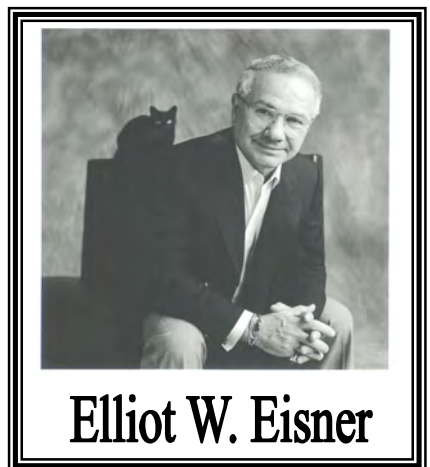
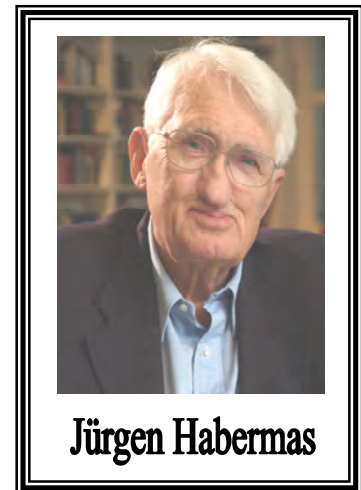
In my view, ideas provide us with an opportunity to visualise both what is and what may become. Ideas motivate actions that reveal new truths and new possibilities and therefore cater to the imagination. Pollock's paintings would falter if limited to the use of a conventional paintbrush or if the artist feared to explore something beyond convention. His work symbolises a conception that has withstood the tests of experimentation and emerged triumphant. Yet, it was once only a speculative hypothesis. According to Dewey (1929), "Every great advance in science has issued from a new audacity of imagination" (p.294). There is no limit set to the scope and depth of hypotheses. As Eisner (2002) asserts:

...all we will ever have are ideas about the world whose truth value is itself dependent upon the opinions of others – the critical communities to which our ideas are sent through conversations, journals, books and speeches – makes our ideas about the world more tentative. It should also make us more modest. This realization should, in addition, help us realize that mind and matter cannot be uncoupled. What we make of a classroom, a school, or a teacher's work is what we make of it. (p.380)

Dewey (1909) claims that because ideas are imperative to the survival of humans, it is necessary for them to be controlled through education. But who controls education? Although Jackson Pollock constructed his paintings through dripping chaos, patterns were still evident. Likewise, the patterns of positivism are evident in modern education.

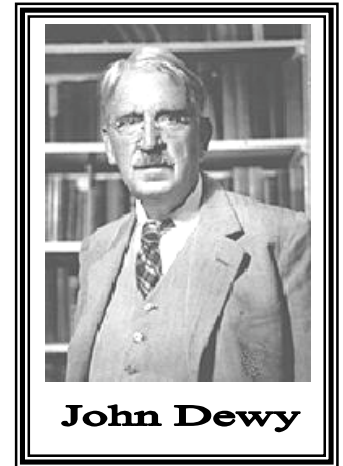
The Pendulum's Effect on Education

It appears that the influence of philosophy on education has conceptualised the artistic process as unreliable. Where science is considered cognitive, teachable and useful; the arts are often considered emotional and ornamental (Eisner, 2003) and even more, a 'soft' alternative (Ewing, 2007). In the United States, performance and outcomes rather than exploration, discovery and imagination have assumed such a dominant role in education that modern day has been referred to as the 'Era of Standards' (Roth, 1996). Eisner (2003)

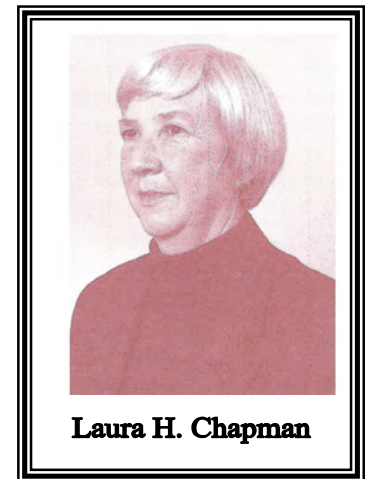


explains, “We live at a time that puts a premium on the measurement of outcomes, on the ability to predict them and on the need to be absolutely clear about what we want to accomplish” (p.375). However, this ‘Era of Standards’ is not a recent phenomenon. In 1909, Dewey debated these same ideals of measured outcomes:

In instruction, the external standard manifests itself in the importance attached to the ‘correct answer’. No one other thing, probably, works so fatally against focusing the attention of teachers upon the training of mind as the domination of their minds by the idea that the chief thing is to get pupils to recite their lessons correctly. As long as this end is uppermost (whether consciously or unconsciously), training of mind remains an incidental and secondary consideration. There is no great difficulty in understanding why this ideal has such vogue. The large number of pupils to be dealt with, and the tendency of parents and school authorities to demand speedy and tangible evidence of progress, conspire to give it currency. (pp.53-54)



Almost a century later, Visual Arts education advocate Professor Laura Chapman continues this debate on ideas of meaning, imagination and the purpose of education. In her keynote address at the 2005 *National Arts Education Association Conference*, Chapman discussed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 which currently affects every public school in the United States. She voiced her concern that the NCLB leads many to believe that federal officials feel students will become “more intelligent, creative, wise, caring, and eager to learn if we test them ‘til they drop” (p.69). Chapman’s perspective considers the NCLB as a



system that mandates training, not education. Accordingly, this ‘training’ is to be conducted by teachers who will “use scientifically proven best practices on statewide tests where questions are asked, the answers are already known, and preferably machine scoreable” (p.69). While there is no doubt that students’ growth needs to be evaluated, what is arguable are the forms of evaluation used.

Although there is strong debate over such assertions (Derewianka), Australian syllabi have been considered less rigorous than those implemented in the United States (Nelson, 2005). In an attempt to identify the characteristics of education systems that outperform Australia in international tests, Dr Kevin Donnelly, Executive Director of Education Strategies, issued a report in 2005 for the Department of Education and Training. This report offered the following recommendations:

- adopt a strong, discipline-based approach;
- provide clear, rigorous and concise intended curriculum documents linked to textbooks, teacher training and classroom practice;
- have an emphasis on formal, whole-class teaching with a greater focus on teacher directed activities;
- have regular testing and examinations used to stream students; and
- have centrally controlled curriculum and examination systems where teachers and schools are given succinct, rigorous and teacher-friendly syllabus documents with less emphasis on school-based curriculum development (pp.3-4).

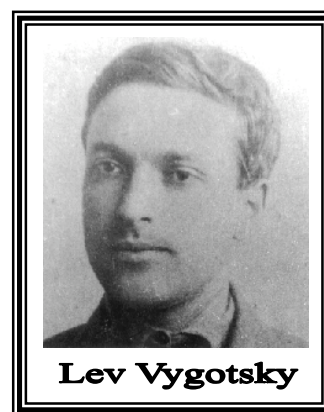
In adopting a syllabus approach to education, Donnelly's report recommended that Australian education will need to "further emphasise summative assessment in preference to formative assessment, include more direct instruction and formal teaching strategies with less emphasis on constructivism and ensure curriculum descriptors are measurable and based on essential learning" (Donnelly, 2005:30). In support, Dr Brendan Nelson, then Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, agreed that Australia must not just maintain its school standards but should raise them (Nelson, 2005). Donnelly's recommendations are bound to affect Visual Arts educational experiences. Concerns regarding standardisation and its implications on Visual Arts education are addressed throughout this study.

While policy makers are preoccupied with boosting test results, the ways in which the arts can contribute to intellectual development and the enrichment of life often go unnoticed (Eisner, 2005). When budgets are tight, opportunities for studies within the arts are increasingly reduced (Hodgkinson, 2004). If the purpose of education is to inspire (Dewey, 1909), one must remember that it is through art that we recognise the importance of different forms of representation and the different ways in which varying images and materials make it possible for meaning to be constructed and expressed (Eisner, 2005). Too much value assigned to outcomes and assessable goals poses a true threat to individualised, non-discriminatory and intellectual education.

Constructing Knowledge

If opportunities for learning and teaching in art are reduced by policy makers and marginalised budgets, what impact will this have on our youth? Where will this take us in the future? After all, as Dewey (1944) has claimed, “One shares in what another has taught and felt in so far, meagerly or amply, has his own attitude modified” (p.5). In school, we may be taught what our educators and policy makers choose is necessary for us to learn. However, we can take what is offered and create our own meaning from it.

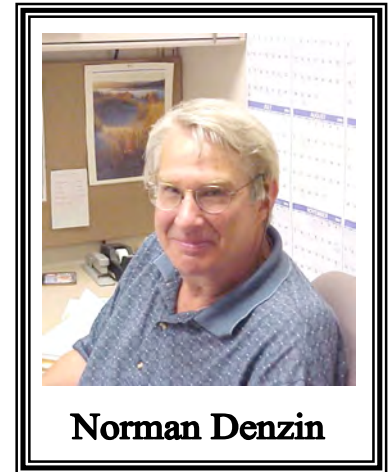
Education and teachers play a significant role in the development of young minds. From a constructivist view, the nature of knowledge suggests that individuals create their understandings “based upon the interaction of what they already know and believe, and the phenomena or ideas with which they come into contact” (Richardson, 1997:3). In the spirit of constructivism, all knowledge is considered tentative, subjective and personal (Airasian & Walsh, 1997). Knowledge is not solely constructed within the mind of the individual but rather through interactions within a social context that involve learners in sharing, constructing and reconstructing their ideas and beliefs (Vygotsky, 1978). From a Vygotskian perspective, social interactions between teacher and student are an essential component of the learning process (Jadallah, 2000).



It is clear that definitions of knowledge have changed over time in reaction to changes in social balance. More recently, Eisner (2002) described knowledge as “a creation of an inventive mind interacting with a universe which itself is a part of what humans construe in the process of interaction” (p.380). Eisner believes teachers should no longer be those who implement the prescriptions of others. Instead they should consider themselves collaborators in the construction of knowledge. It is this type of belief that has come to characterise some of the current movements in qualitative research.

Since the work of qualitative scholars, especially of those writing narrative research, is often exploratory and subjective, it has at times been regarded as fiction not science, for there is no way of verifying the truth statements (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b). As the debate confirms, there is a long tradition that ‘truth’ gained through the practices of science

transcends the ‘fiction’ of opinion and personal bias. Those who prefer a value-free objective science model to defend their position have regarded such qualitative research as an assault on this tradition. However, this argument against qualitative research has been viewed as “an attempt to legislate one version of truth over another” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b:8).



Although some philosophers may entertain the ideal of a complete integration of knowledge, knowledge by its very nature will always remain analytic and discriminating, attaining large syntheses and sweeping generalizations (Dewey, 1929). So the pendulum will continue to swing and the debate will continue as it has since the times of Aristotle. In the meantime, new problems for consideration will emerge in new fields of inquiry.

The Postmodern Transition

As Pollock’s pendulum swung, the traditional path of paint was eventually overlapped and dissected. The artist knocked the pendulum’s swaying consistency to create a disrupted image with a multitude of new and more detailed transitions. Within a 21st Century postmodern climate, I have the option to draw from a multitude of qualitative approaches to follow any path I so desire. Suspecting that all truth claims mask and serve particular interests in local, cultural and political struggles, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) argue that “the core of postmodernism is the doubt that any method or theory, any discourse or genre, or any tradition or novelty has a universal and general claim as the ‘right’ or privileged form of authoritative knowledge” (p.961). It has been a strenuous journey within an on-going dispute for academics to be able to take such a stance in their research and thereby enable multiple paths and optional approaches within qualitative studies.

In 1999, *The Postmodern Educator* (Diamond & Mullen) recognised that there were a percentage of people that “devoted their energies to justifying the importance of innovative thinking and unexpected research strategies” (p.3). This group of scholars aimed to expose the limitations of previous social



science research and clear the way of any obstruction. They did not want to partake in an obsessive quest for certain knowledge that transcended a fallible, human perspective (Barone, 2001). Instead, postmodern researchers sought alternative methods for evaluating their work including verisimilitude, emotionality, personal responsibility, an ethic of caring and dialogue with their participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b:12). These aspects contribute to the methods applied to this study and are discussed in further detail later.

Academic research no longer needs to be constrained by ‘objective,’ positivistic approaches. Today, we see definitions of rigorous research in academia being defined as ambiguous and celebratory towards meanings that are partial, tentative, incomplete and sometimes even contradictory (Barone, 2001). Barone (2001) verified that such an epistemological stance would seem appropriate to a project of educational inquiry where the role or purpose would be “the enhancement of meaning, rather than a reduction of uncertainty” (p.153).



While an increasing number of educational scholars began to explore approaches to inquiry that were more artistic than scientific in character (Cole & Knowles, 2001a; Barone & Eisner, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), shifts within postmodernism brought about new conceptualisations of how research worked, how meanings were made and what purposes social research served (Finley, 2005). In 1981, Eisner contributed to the rise of a relatively new movement of qualitative research known as arts-based inquiry and emphasised “the power of form to inform” (p.7). Arts-based inquiry regarded form as a part of the content



that relied significantly on the kinds of meanings people were likely to obtain from the work. Writing sociologically had previously been subject to the limitations of institutionally set rules for academic discourse (Finley & Knowles, 1995; Eisner, 1981), and as a result had placed limitations on artistic aspects in research presentation. However, there has since been a call for educational researchers to use many different art forms, as well as various narrative forms, to proliferate what has been hailed as a new social science paradigm (Finley, 2005).

Arts-based, postmodern activity emerged from a shift to narrative in sociological discourse (Finley, 2005). Its effectiveness depended upon the degree to which it aroused (rather than transmitted) particular feelings and images and provoked experiential learning (Diamond & Mullen, 1999). Narratives of experience became viewed as both personal and social (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Cole & Knowles, 2001a) and reflected the aesthetic dimensions of arts-based research including imagination and community, as well as perceptual, emotional and sensual awareness (Finley, 2005).

Arts-based inquiry allowed researchers to describe and analyse lives within their respective contexts while seeking greater levels of authenticity within the research process. Imaginative representations possessed the potential to expand the dimension which could not be seen but could be intuitively grasped (Finley & Knowles, 1995).

Arts-Informed Inquiry

Working with this expanding dimension of qualitative research, arts-based inquiry grew into an approach referred to as arts-informed inquiry. Arts-informed inquiry continued to blend the systematic and rigorous qualities of social science inquiry with the creative and imaginative qualities of the arts (Cole & Knowles, 2001a) but with a greater attempt to reach audiences beyond the academy. Arts-informed researchers set out to honour the diverse forms of knowing that were part of everyday experience. Their goals related to relevance, accessibility and engagement in research projects. The attempt for arts-informed inquiry to reach a wide audience was seen as an explicit endeavour to make a difference not only in the lives of ordinary citizens but also in the thinking of policy makers, politicians, legislators and other key decision makers (Cole & Knowles, 2008).



The purpose of arts-informed inquiry is for art (be it literary, visual or performance) to inform processes and representations of scholarly inquiry. As such, the relationship

between the purpose of the research (related to knowledge advancement) and the developing competence of the chosen art form is crucial (Cole & Knowles, 2008; Cole, 2005). In arts-informed inquiry we see ‘form to inform’ (Eisner, 1981) becoming the central defining element.

Other defining elements of arts-informed inquiry include:

- methodological integrity is largely determined by the relationship between the form and substance of the research text;
- an openness to the expansive possibilities of the human imagination – following a more natural process of engagement that relies on common sense decision making, intuition and a general responsiveness to the natural flow of experiences;
- the predominance of the researcher’s artistry gives the researcher-as-artist a subjective and reflexive presence;
- the choice and articulation of form reflects an intention to reach audiences beyond the academy; and
- relying on art to inform and engage, research intentions are to evoke and provoke emotion, thought and action (Cole & Knowles, 2008; Cole, 2005; Cole & Knowles, 2001b).

The elements above define the current study. I wanted this thesis to be something that excited me, the researcher, as well as the reader. Rather than merely observe history, I wanted to play a part in it. I wanted to tell you, my reader, the story of how and why I became interested in this research project while I shared the insights of others who had undergone similar situations to my own. I hoped to convey a human connection to all those involved and to inspire you to feel informed by our experiences. In so doing, with these thoughts and actions, I have made a political statement.

Creating My Work of Art

As Finley (2003) so clearly attests, “it is an act of political emancipation from the dominant paradigm of science for new paradigm researchers to say ‘I am doing art’ and to mean ‘I am doing research’ – or vice versa” (p.290). A work of art is exactly what I perceive this research to be.

Within this study, I am at once the researcher, a participant and an artist. As a researcher, I attempt to tell the story of my research project. To acknowledge the centrality of my experience in this story - my own tellings, livings, relivings and retellings that this thesis portrays (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) - one of the starting points I choose is a self-narrative which begins in the following chapter. It seemed quite natural for me to include a self-narrative within a study that originated from my own thoughts, actions and emotions. Through this participation, I found that I was able to deal with questions of who I was as an early career Visual Arts teacher and how the transitions into a teaching career shaped my identity and consequently directed me towards the development of this project. What became apparent here were the realisations I made regarding my own experience which in turn allowed me to more effectively connect to the experiences of my research participants.



Although I am the researcher and the one being researched, I am not the only focus. The stories of four other early career teachers are also incorporated. Like most art projects, this study voices varying perspectives, points of views and angles of vision (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a). These aspects move from the personal to the political, from the local to the historical and the cultural. They create space for give-and-take between reader and writer, and they do much more than turn the ‘other’ into the object of social science gaze (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a).

The creation of this space could not be premeditated for the stories informed the visual representations as their implicit and metaphorical connections became evident. As such, this work of art was not rigidly attached to predefined aims. Dewey (1934) referred to this ability to shift aims as *flexible purposing*. Undoubtedly, flexible purposing is a common feature of artists, teachers and qualitative researchers. Jackson Pollock could not predict the exact final outcomes of his compositions. His paintings took form only as they were being created. While I researched this thesis, ends followed the means and in this process, the work yielded clues that I subsequently pursued (Dewey, 1934).

Through flexible purposing, my role as the artist-researcher allowed me to become a bricoleur, or a collage artist - the person who assembled disparate parts into a final picture.

When creating a collage, an artist blends together images, objects, words, interpretations and understandings to form a new creation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a). The underlying assumption of collage is that viewers perceive and interpret the images not sequentially or one at a time but simultaneously. The viewer puts the distinct pieces together into a meaningful, emotional whole. This process therefore provides psychological and emotional unity to an interpretive experience. The product of my interpretive bricoleur labour is therefore a complex and reflexive collage that interconnects images and representations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a).

This study collages text and imagery in various forms. Because pictures in books keep me interested and intrigued, it seemed appropriate for me to include them in my own book. The inclusion of visual images made it possible to formulate meanings that eluded linguistic description (Barone & Eisner, 1997). However, the actual process of creating the collaged artworks did more than just enhance the meaning behind what was said. The actions involved – selecting, cutting, arranging, gluing - allowed me to connect with my research on familiar and comforting levels. It was through the medium of collage that I was able to physically construct my interpretation of the participant artist-teachers' identities while at the same time metaphorically build the story of this research project.

Although I was able to connect with my research on familiar levels, the sound of the kookaburra laughing at me just outside my window did have a peculiar way of reinforcing my foreign surroundings. Creating this thesis in Australia provided interesting challenges that were not easily foreseen. I needed to understand and comprehend my art in a way that made sense to me but I also needed to understand and make sense of it within the context of a culture other than my own. For example - with the exception of my self-narrative and quotes written by fellow Americans or Canadians, this thesis was written in Australia and therefore uses Australian-English.

My self-narrative was written in American-English to maintain its authenticity. This self-narrative, constructed from letters, journals, calendars, sketchbooks, photo albums, supervisor reports and my own memories of the 1999-2000 American school year was the initial phase of this study. I had told my story as an early career teacher several times but it wasn't until I began compiling it that I noticed particular themes emerge. During the process, I anxiously anticipated learning even more through the stories of the four

participants. Their voices, combined with my own, are presented later in the form of a novelette.

With a political voice speaking cross-culturally through both American-English and Australian-English, I have described to you my prescription for conveying and informing our human connections. I am a researcher who has explored my experience and the experiences of others as teachers and as artists. Echoing the efforts of teacher-researchers Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993), I too question a common assumption that knowledge of teaching should be generated at the university and then practiced in the schools. This assumption is problematic to the transmission of knowledge from source to destination. To build the relationships between schools and universities, Cochran-Smith and Lytle worked both inside and outside the culture of a large research university, while remaining acutely conscious of their efforts to merge practice and theory. The teacher-researchers remind us that “legitimizing the knowledge that comes from practitioners’ research on their own practice – whether in schools or in universities – is a critical dimension of change in both cultures” (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993:xi). In support of bridging the gap between practice and research, my knowledge of teaching as a teacher-researcher myself also includes this ‘insider/outsider’ juxtaposition.

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) believe that if it is true we know ourselves through our stories, then it is therefore true that our knowledge of ourselves is an affective knowledge. With that said, I shall ‘begin’ this thesis with my self-narrative.

CHAPTER 2: SELF-NARRATIVE

How Teaching Became My Art

Flashback

The year was 1999. The millennium was fast approaching making Y2K the greatest buzz. The Oregon/California economy was booming as the population growth reached record-breaking highs. The job market for teachers appeared bigger and better than ever and I was thinking the time was just right to be entering a career in teaching.

I always felt a gravitational pull towards teaching. My mom began her teaching career at age 21, employed at the same school she had attended kindergarten through eighth grade. Thirty-six years later, she retired from that same institution.

I seemed to resemble my mom. Like her, I played trumpet, I had a creative eye and I always knew if no other job presented itself to me I, too, could become a teacher. But unlike my mom, I wanted to live my life somewhere other than California. I wanted to travel the world but how would I ever gain the finances and the time to do so? I envisioned a career in teaching to be the perfect solution.



In 1992, I started teaching piano and trumpet to earn an income while completing my undergraduate degree at California State University Sacramento (CSUS). Until this time, my creative outlets had been focused mostly towards music. I had played piano for as long as I could remember. In school bands I played trumpet, mellophone, horn or mallet percussion. I was involved in marching bands, concert bands, pep bands, jazz bands, choir and musical theater. But I never wanted to major in Music because I didn't want the pressure of the required solo performances. This was when I opted for Visual Arts. Although I had never taken a formal art class, I knew I had the interest and believed in my capability to earn a degree in Fine Arts. After graduation from CSUS in 1995, I had a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts, a minor in Music and with the passing of the California Basic Education Skills Test I was

qualified to substitute teach even though I had, ironically, never enrolled in an Education course.

With such little experience and only four years older than some of my students, substitute teaching presented a continual challenge. However, I had the opportunity to experience teaching kindergarten through twelfth grade plus special education classes. For two years I watched, I learned and I developed my interest. I decided I wanted to settle into a teaching career yet my desire to live outside California persisted. So I packed my bags and moved north to Oregon.

Having gained Oregon residency by living there for a year, I was then ready to apply to Southern Oregon University's (SOU) Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program to finally earn my official teaching license. Teaching Visual Arts was the most exciting career I could think of. I knew that art had made an essential contribution to the development of my emotional and spiritual well-being and I could only hope to pass that feeling onto those I would eventually teach.



Becoming a Visual Arts Teacher

Although I considered myself an artist, I was not interested in becoming a professional artist. Aiming for such a career appeared difficult and unpredictable. My college experience showed me that art competitions were too political. I needed to know the 'right people' and I had to make serious investments of time and money if I was to become successful in the art world. Life as an artist seemed to lack reliability. However, a career in teaching would provide the security I was looking for. Becoming a Visual Arts teacher seemed the perfect blend. I could do something I enjoyed and I would have a positive influence on growing minds. I would get a monthly paycheck, be provided with health insurance and start a retirement fund. All my aspirations seemed to align.

I also decided, somewhat naively, that being a teacher would allow me the luxury of time and the finances required to travel the world. Prior to actually becoming a full-time teacher, I believed my work day would be over by 3:00pm, weekends and holidays would be free of obligation, there would always be time off at Christmas and Easter plus nearly three months vacation in the summer. In addition, teaching would allow me an annual income at US\$32,000 and even more with each year of experience. Nothing in my life at that time could have sounded better!

My Artistic Identity

In 1999, I graduated at the top of my class from the MAT program at SOU. While earning my teaching license, I made lasting friendships, built a good rapport with those already in the teaching profession and began to develop an individualized style as an artist.

When asked if I considered myself an artist, I would respond, "We are all artists in one form or another." I had a good eye and I felt comfortable with materials but if I was asked to draw such things as a dog, a person or a house from memory, I couldn't do it. I couldn't instinctively draw the way I believed a true artist should be able to intuitively depict things. This was very frustrating for me.

But why did an artist have to draw? It was during my enrolment in the MAT program that I bought my first computer. I realized computer knowledge would be in high demand when looking for future employment, so I did everything possible to learn about it as quickly as I could. I got *Adobe PhotoShop 4.0* from a friend, bought a scanner and a printer and I began to teach myself what I felt I needed to know. However, working at a computer was not exactly satisfying my artistic desires.

My artistic talent began to manifest itself in working with color, textures and having what felt to be an instinctive knack for achieving balance. I didn't feel confident in creating subject matter but I enjoyed placing subject matter in aesthetically peculiar ways. Being inspired since high school by Salvador Dali and Renee Magritte, I wanted to create surreal images but couldn't paint or draw well enough to develop them. Two years after finishing a degree in Fine Arts, I finally decided collage would be a great way to explore my talents with composition and color, and thereby create the surrealistic images I loved.

For the first time ever, I truly felt I had found my artistic niche. My skill in collaging was well received by those around me. My confidence as an artist began to develop. Although I only did two works while in the teacher education program, both were accepted into the SOU Art Show. Then a couple of years later, one of those works which also happened to be the first collage I ever made, sold for \$500.



**"The Gathering of Appeal"
My First Collage**

Entering the Teaching Profession

In my journal dated May 16th, 1999 I recorded:

Goals as of right now: Turn in work sample, design a webpage, finish portfolio, get a job, climb Mt. Mc Laughlin, graduate, visit Joey and go to The Gorge, teach art, sing in a choir, teach overseas, develop a better curriculum, work with oil, pay off student loans, buy a home, get a new car, plant a garden, travel all over the world every summer with tax return money, take dancing lessons, take piano lessons, win some kind of award for my efforts in education, earn my PhD, teach at college level, write a book.

Most of my energy at the turn of the century was focused on becoming employed as a fulltime teacher. The SOU Art Show in 1999 would be my last exhibition for several years to come. I had just graduated from the MAT program and my priority during that summer was to find a job. It was June and the new school year began in September.

While attending SOU, I had been living a five-hour drive from my fiancé. Simon¹ and I managed a long distance relationship while I studied for my teaching license in Oregon and he studied for a teaching license of his own in California. However, I finished a year ahead of him. Since Simon still had one more year to complete, we agreed I would move back to Sacramento and teach for a year while he finished school. The following year we would move to Oregon together and settle into our teaching careers. So July came and I was again living

¹ Names of people and public schools have been changed.

in California's capitol city. While my 'emergency back-up plan' application to substitute teach had already been approved, the full-time job hunt was in full speed.

I felt prepared to begin a career in teaching. I had gone above and beyond in all my courses during the MAT program because much of what I wanted to learn, I felt I had to teach myself. In hindsight, I believed I could have taught some of those courses better myself. Perhaps this was yet another reason why I wanted to be a teacher. I truly felt I could make a difference.

During the summer of 1999, I anxiously awaited my first professional teaching position in the public school system. I was still teaching piano. I had been a substitute teacher for two years and I had a full year of practicum experience through the MAT program². My binders were filled with ideas and I was ready to work with my own class. The focus of energy that I was putting towards my career made it seem like it had become my new art.

The last week of August rolled around and it was looking as if I was going to be a substitute teacher again. The school year had commenced but no positions had come available despite my persistence in trying to find them. It wasn't until the first week of September that the San Juan Unified School District phoned me. I had interviewed with them back in May, but now they wanted to see me right away. We arranged to meet that day at Edward High School, located in the middle of Sacramento.

I felt a huge sense of relief with the thought that I wouldn't have to return to substitute teaching. However, my excitement began to fluctuate when I found the school and noticed a ten-foot high fence encircling it. My first experience as a professional teacher was about to begin behind bars. After parking my truck, I eventually located a gate and was let in to meet with the Vice Principal. He instantly informed me the school was desperately searching for a Data Processing teacher, especially since the students were already in session.

Although I had absolutely no knowledge or qualifications in Data Processing, the District confirmed they could employ me for the position if they let me teach a Computer Graphics

² The MAT program at SOU offered a full year practicum experience for preservice teachers. I was in the classroom from the very first day through to the very last day of the school year.

class as well. Ironically, I had only been acquainted with computers for a year. The Vice Principal assured me the course was simple to teach and a textbook would outline everything I needed to know. I agreed to take the position regardless of my level of competence. I would start the following Monday, teaching one class of Computer Graphics in the morning and two classes of Data Processing in the afternoon.

First Semester

I spent much of my first semester dealing with outdated and broken computers. I quickly discovered I had no access to *PhotoShop*. In addition, the newly retired teacher who was in the room before me had been there for over twenty years and was not very fond of cleaning. I spent several weeks sorting out the classroom, turning it into 'my' classroom and making it a manageable working space. But this was just one classroom. Down the hallway and around the corner I had another huge mess to sort through. On a positive note, amidst the cleaning process I found several little treasures - stencils, paper, pens and even a book explaining the origin of computer graphics. This book would become the greatest resource to the structuring of my curriculum. It started with an introduction to how the binary system worked and followed through with lesson ideas on such topics as trademarks, logos and pictographs. From this, my mind exploded into a multitude of ideas on how to run my courses.

The two Data Processing classes were made up entirely of freshmen. These 9th graders were very rowdy and difficult to keep focused. Most of their concerns seemed to be based on how they looked and who they liked. In the Computer Graphics class there were students ranging from 9th to 12th grades. This class had a community of Russians who would group together and speak only in their native language. They would often look at me and laugh. This fed my insecurities and made me feel as if I had no control over the situation. There was also a group of 'jocks' in this class that cliqued together and some girls who gathered around them. They always wanted to loiter in my classroom before school, during breaks, during lunch and after school. This kept me from getting any work done. But I wanted them to like me, so I often obliged.

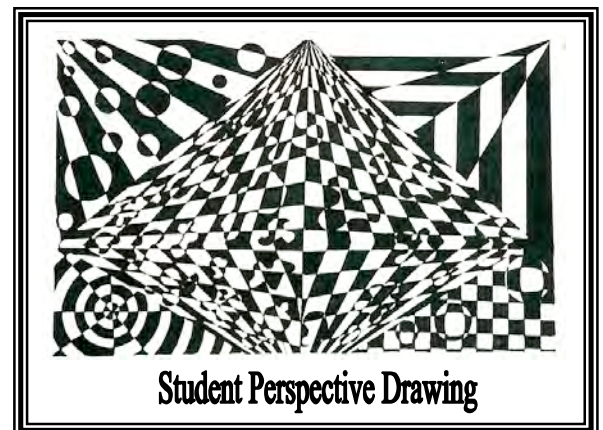
New challenges were presented each day. On one occasion, I was almost assaulted. A student named Leon threatened me with his fist after I took away the walkman he was disobediently listening to during class. After school that day I went to the Vice Principal to see what could

be done about the situation and what I could do to feel safe with Leon in my classroom. The Vice Principal was in a conversation with his secretary when I entered his office to discuss the matter. Before I said anything, he put his hand up towards my face and said, "It's not your fault" then continued with his conversation. Having already been made aware of the incident through campus security, the Vice Principal did not want to discuss it any further. That was the level of support I received from the administrative staff. The next day Leon was back in my class and I was left to deal with him on my own. I felt it was always like that. Day after day I struggled to stay afloat in that school, feeling as if there was no support from anybody I worked with. But I wasn't going to give up.

In the Classroom

Maybe I wasn't a Visual Arts teacher the way I had envisioned but I did my best to make the classes fun through my artistic capabilities. I was able to put energy into developing creative lesson plans and enhancing the classroom with my ideas and visual displays of student work.

The first unit I taught to the Computer Graphics class was a perspective assignment that utilized a vanishing point. I felt comfortable teaching this assignment because I had taught it once already during my student teaching experience. Many students asked why they weren't working on the computer but I told them they needed to practice



Student Perspective Drawing

the assignment by hand first and then it would be transferred to the computer. Actually, I was stalling in hopes we might be able to procure some graphics software for the computers in the room. This was never going to happen so eventually I had the students do the perspective design utilizing a vanishing point on the computer with the existing Windows 95 Draw & Paint program.

Trying to stay creative and appeal to student interest, I continued to develop what I believed to be unique lesson ideas. For a week I drove around Sacramento taking slides of signs, trademarks and logos to use during another unit I was to implement with the Graphics class. Unfortunately, the slides went missing from my desk before they were ever used. A student informed me who had taken them but nothing could be proved, so I never got them back. I

had put much effort and money into creating something that I felt the students could really enjoy, only to have it taken away. I went home in tears that day.

As for the other course I was employed to teach, I felt much more apprehensive. At the time, I didn't even know what Data Processing meant. When I cleaned out that classroom I did manage to find the textbook the Vice Principal had informed me about. Fortunately, this text was able to teach me that Data Processing meant teaching the students how to do such things as type, create a database and develop spreadsheets.

There was another teacher on campus who also taught this freshman course but he wasn't much help. I asked him how he taught his class and he gave me a week's worth of videos and a test for the 9th graders to take at the end of the week. Granted that covered a week but what about the rest of the semester? The teacher suggested I just follow the text and that was all he had to offer. Once again, I was left to my own devices.

The confrontations seemed relentless. With so few properly working computers, the students had to cooperate in pairs or groups of three. This meant half the class was always waiting for a turn. In order to avoid discipline problems I had to develop ideas to keep that half of the class 'entertained' while the others were practicing their typing exercise. This was an enormous challenge for me as a novice teacher.

Students commonly spent the period inattentive and off-task. I would let them get away with just about anything because I wanted to be 'cool.' I dreaded my chaotic classes because I felt incapable of keeping the students focused. The assignments lacked depth and without a printer, work had to be checked on the monitor which made reliability inconclusive. Reluctantly, I felt my classes were beyond my control and no assistance or useful advice seemed available. However, the Vice Principal eventually allowed me to conduct both courses from one classroom. Teaching from one room helped considerably with gaining control over my working environment.

Just before the Christmas break, I was pleased to finally implement a successful lesson with my Data Processing classes. Since Y2K was approaching, I decided to research why the phenomenon had been termed 'a scare.' I then explained my gained understanding of Y2K to

the classes. For their assignment, students typed a paper on what they believed would happen January 1, 2000 at the stroke of midnight. Their opinions stimulated enthusiastic discussions. Some students argued nothing would happen. Others had families who were stocking up on a year's worth of supplies. Their predictions were made and the outcomes would be evident when we met again after the holiday break. Or would we ever meet again? I wasn't sure what to think of Y2K myself. Simon and I would celebrate the new millennium in Oregon because if we were going to be stranded, that's where we wanted to be.

Towards the End of First Semester

While in Oregon over the Christmas break, I met with Arlene, my landlady from the previous year. She was an English teacher at Mountain Middle School. While visiting over lunch, she informed me that her school's Draw & Paint teacher was retiring at the end of January and they would be interviewing for a replacement. I knew that the San Juan Unified School District in Sacramento had hired me, as they do all first year teachers, on a six-month contract. This contract would be expiring in January allowing me to legally apply for this 'dream' position at Mountain Middle School in Oregon. I was not feeling very attached to my current teaching position so I phoned immediately to receive an application.

Well, Y2K amounted to absolutely nothing. The holiday break was over and I was back in the classroom at Edward High. Only this time I knew in my mind it could potentially be for only three more weeks. Sure enough, at the beginning of January I was offered a contract to continue with the San Juan Unified School District for an additional six months. Since there wasn't any pressure to sign it immediately, I chose to wait and see how the position at Mountain Middle School might play out.

Within a week my application was mailed and a few days later I was scheduled for an interview. My portfolio was in top-notch condition and I felt I knew an answer to any possible question that might be asked. I ended up walking out of that interview more confident than ever. A week later I was offered, and I accepted, the job.

Once word of my departure was made known at Edward, many students surprisingly showed disappointment. Some said they had been looking forward to taking classes with me again and that they had actually learned something as a result of my teaching. My students began to

show me much more respect. It was pleasant to feel appreciated by them after all the difficult times I felt we had been through.

A couple of my co-workers, Steve and Bob, had guessed I was interviewing for another position when I had been absent a couple of weeks previous. They were proud of me for leaving the school which they often referred to as a 'shithole.' But they were also counting the days to their retirement and said to me that they felt jealous to see me go before them. I had regularly eaten lunch with Steve and Bob during that first semester, listening to them despise virtually everything about Edward High and speak rudely of fellow staff members on a regular basis. I wasn't sure what to make of the two of them and often wondered what they might be saying about me behind my back.

My experience at Edward High School had left me with many negative feelings towards teaching. While I was there, only one staff meeting had been held. At that meeting, I learned only eight students in the entire school of 800 had passed standardized testing the previous year³. The academic statistics of the school were so poor it was close to becoming a continuation school for students who were expelled from other schools within the District. I didn't feel prepared for this. Luckily I knew I would not be there for much longer. I was overjoyed to be leaving earlier than expected.

My Artistic Identity at the End of First Semester

My personal time during this first semester of teaching was spent learning how to teach classes I knew very little about. I never found the time or the energy to do art for myself. If I wasn't reading a chapter the night before I had to teach it, I was in bed trying to catch up on some much-needed sleep.

I did, however, put my creative energy into lesson planning. I designed projects that would allow students to draw from their own interests and personality, and I felt I had been imaginative with my final assessment ideas. I decorated my classroom with items that

³ Each spring California students in grades 9 through 11 were required to take a series of tests through the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program (STAR). One part of the test was the Standard Achievement Test, ninth edition (also known as the Stanford 9 or SAT 9), a norm-referenced, multiple-choice test which showed how California students performed in comparison to students across the country. The other part of the test was composed of California Standards Tests that showed how well California students were mastering the grade-level content standards established by the state Board of Education. The tests covered Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies.

appealed to the students and I received positive feedback from them about my resourceful teaching.

But the teaching profession was very different than I had previously perceived it to be. Teaching consumed me. Even when I would lie down at night I would be thinking, "What am I going to do about Leon? Why do the people I work with have to be so negative? How will I find the necessary resources?" I never felt there was time to relax because something always needed to be prepared. In the classroom I was struggling with time management. I had issues with setting boundaries. I had underdeveloped procedures. I just didn't have the skills or the confidence to establish classroom rules and routines. Only experience would help me learn to cope with such situations.

Second Semester

My bags were packed and I easily said goodbye to Sacramento once again. It wasn't difficult leaving Simon because we had already lived a long-distance relationship. Plus his teaching program would be finished in May and he would soon be joining me in Oregon.

On January 26th I arrived at Mountain Middle School to observe my predecessor Dan Johnson teach his last couple of days. During the class time, he was showing old films on an analogue projector to the Draw & Paint students. I noticed the majority of his materials were extremely outdated and the classroom environment did not take full advantage of the size and beauty of the fantastic space.

I spent the last two days of Mountain's first semester with Dan. During that time, he showed me around his classroom and gave me several ideas for when the class became my own. Dan was visibly sad to be leaving the school after so many years and I could tell he was truly appreciated by the staff. I felt the environment at Mountain Middle School was the complete opposite to the 'prison' atmosphere I was in just one week prior.

On Friday, January 28th the school held an inservice day for teachers. This was the first chance I had to turn the art room into my own. I had just finished cleaning out two classrooms filled with decades of outdated and nonusable material and now I had to do it all again. Sometimes I was at the school until 10 o'clock at night cleaning my space! Finally at one

point Arlene said something to me that I won't ever forget, "Denise, go home. You will never be all done." Although the cleaning was an ongoing process for a few weeks, I did manage to have the classroom in working condition by Monday, January 31, 2000 - the first day of the second semester.

Mountain had a 'Gold Day' and 'Black Day' block schedule. Similar to Edward, the teachers had a total of three classes per day and one prep period. Classes were scheduled in 80-minute intervals. This was a nice schedule to have as a Draw & Paint teacher because it allowed ample time for lecture and production.

During that first week, many students who knew Mr. Johnson were surprised to see me. They were also shocked by how the room had changed. As they settled in, I unexpectedly discovered just how complicated it was to fill a position that was previously well established. The students signed up for Draw & Paint expecting Mr. Johnson. When they saw me instead, I sensed their disappointment. Students would often ask me where Mr. Johnson was and why I was there. They asked if I would be doing some assignment that Mr. Johnson did or if they would be able to do things that Mr. Johnson allowed them to do. For example, Mr. Johnson's students could sit at his desk, play on his computer and hang out in his supply room which was where he kept his office. I didn't feel this was appropriate but their pleading was relentless, continually bemoaning, "Mr. Johnson let us do it." It was a constant dispute and one that I eventually lost. Soon, the students were sitting at my desk, surfing the Internet and plopped on the couch in the supply room.

By my second week at this new school, I had met the entire faculty. Unlike Edward High, staff meetings were held every other week at Mountain. At the first staff meeting of the new semester, I was officially introduced and received a very warm welcome. Leonard approached me personally and introduced himself as the Pottery teacher in the classroom next to mine. He was quite friendly and accommodating, and soon I realised how fortunate I was to be working with him in Visual Arts at Mountain Middle School.

Within these two weeks I had decided to move back into Arlene's garage where I had previously lived. Originally, Arlene and I thought we could carpool to work but our times were

not compatible. I always felt I needed to arrive earlier and leave later during that first year of teaching. Many extra hours were spent in my classroom preparing for the next day.

In the Art Classroom

I was given a \$400 budget to present a semester's worth of meaningful art experiences to approximately 180 students. It wasn't a lot of money but it was \$400 more than I was offered at Edward High and I knew I was resourceful enough to make it work. Regardless of my budget, I was just excited to finally have the chance to implement my accumulated Visual Arts curriculum.

As the semester progressed, I began to notice particular behavior patterns repeat themselves. For example, I found it difficult to teach my students, even at the high school level, to conserve and respect materials. The students were frequently careless, wasteful and destructive with the supplies and my budget couldn't afford it. Clean-up time was another issue that surfaced. Although I designated the last ten minutes of each class for cleaning, somehow, especially during paint production, I was the one left to do the clean-up work before the next class entered. I just hadn't gained the teaching strategies to enforce efficient procedures.

Painting seemed more difficult to teach than drawing. When there were painting assignments, I found that the class became clearly divided between fast and slow workers. There were students that would consider their assignment done in just a few minutes while others needed several class sessions to do their best work. I continuously struggled with keeping the hasty workers on task while the rest of the class caught up. I devised supplemental lesson plans but the students wanted a grade for their efforts, otherwise they refused to do the work. Then I became confused in how to balance the assessment between those who did extra work and those who did not.

I was certainly faced with my fair share of surprises - inside *and* outside the classroom. Not only did I have staff meetings to attend but I also found myself on the Responsibility Team which met twice a month. I was assigned bus duties before and after school, hall duties between each class and a hall sweep during my free period. I continuously felt like I had to

be somewhere other than where I wanted to be. I wanted to be in my classroom preparing lessons and organizing my thoughts. I wasn't prepared for so many additional obligations.

Nearing the End of the School Year

I was hired as a probationary teacher at Mountain Middle School. This meant I would have to interview for my job again at the end of the year. Since I knew this interview would be fast approaching, my focus was on making a favorable impression. In spite of the challenges, I really loved Mountain especially since my experience at Edward had been rather negative. To enhance my image and increase my opportunity, I volunteered to run track meets, host skate nights and attend the Crisis Prevention Workshop. I was very active within the school community during my first semester that I was there, and in the end, it produced a beneficial result.

I had to compete with Leonard's most recent student teacher and several other applicants to keep my position. But the day after the interviews were conducted, I was offered the job on permanent status. The interviewing committee appreciated that I didn't just presume I would be given the position but that I took care and put much effort into reapplying. This was one of the happiest days of the year for me.

However, as the year wound down, I was about to experience another life-changing transition. There were just three weeks left of school and Leonard and I were actively organizing our End-of-the-Year Art Show. This was our chance to share with the entire school the wonderful artwork our classes had produced. Both Leonard and I were always so proud of our students' accomplishments.

Two weekends before the art show, Simon rented a U-Haul and moved our belongings to Oregon. We now had a house, I was out of Arlene's garage for good and I was finally going to be living with my fiancé. One problem - just two days after Simon had moved to Oregon, he really began to miss something about Sacramento. Her name was Samantha. Simon was forced to confess that he no longer wanted to marry me but that it actually took him moving back to Oregon to know for sure. A five-year relationship had just ended. I was shocked and devastated, and had no idea this was coming. I had envisioned him attending my art opening at Mountain and meeting the wonderful people I worked with but these expectations were never

to eventuate. If I wanted to stay in our new home, I would have to find a roommate. My career had stabilized but my personal life was in turmoil.

Somehow work managed to keep me focused on something other than Simon. I put my energy into the art show and in the end received many compliments for my efforts. Some teachers commented that it was the best work they had ever seen of Mountain art students. I found comfort in my job regardless of all the tension at home. I could not have been in a better place than where I was while going through this transition.

Stages of Transition

Since I changed schools half way through the year, I never felt completely settled during my first year of teaching. Edward High was only meant to be a temporary job for me because I did not want to live in California. On the other hand, I desired settling into a permanent position at Mountain Middle School.

At the start of the year, I had assumed I would continue substitute teaching because I hadn't been offered a job. Then a placement presented itself and I had to start my first day as a fulltime classroom teacher after the students were already in session. My idealistic side felt secure with my ability to be a teacher because I was young and energetic. I could relate well with the students because not many years had passed since I was a high school student myself. I had a multitude of ideas, good organizational skills and a decent sense of humor to enhance a comfortable and relaxed environment. But the whole idea of being comfortable and relaxed rapidly shifted. I soon felt like I had evolved into this horrible person always nagging at students trying to get them to do what I needed them to do.

My first impressions of working in a public school demonstrated to me that teachers were on their own. As long as no one was complaining, it seemed like no one really cared. I could do the best job I was capable of or I could just scrape through each day. It really depended on how much I wanted to put into it. But it was my nature to generate my best. I came in on weekends. I stayed late at night. I always wanted to give my job everything I had and if it didn't please anyone but me, that had to be okay.

I recognized that this first year in the profession had its struggles and surprises but I was fortunate enough to realize that each year would improve with experience. For example, replacing retired teachers certainly presented unexpected challenges but I could acknowledge this as only temporary. My friend Melinda, who was also a first year Visual Arts teacher during that same time, kept telling me her job was much more difficult than she had ever imagined. I had to agree. But I sustained a sense of resilience and chose to accept the challenges as part of a learning experience. Melinda, however, decided to leave the profession. A few years later her decision led me to write this thesis.

No question about it, being a first year teacher was difficult. I was often without the skills or resources to keep students focused. If the students were not constantly involved, behavior issues arose. When students misbehaved, others in the class were affected. Trying to maintain student focus and avoid disruptive behavior became an endless cycle of confrontations. I gave up trying to control the students during the first semester. As long as my classroom door was closed, nobody on the outside could tell how chaotic the class was on the inside. It eventually became easier to just let the students do as they pleased. If they wanted to play games on the computer, that was great - at least they would be sitting in a chair.

At Mountain I had a second chance to hone my skills. I developed my procedures more thoroughly, I used a seating chart and I created routines. Although some aspects of teaching became smoother with time, I still seemed to focus more on controlling the students than helping them learn during my first year of teaching. I didn't have time to sit at a table and do art with the students like I initially thought I would. Instead, I ran around making sure the water faucet was turned off or paint wasn't being flushed down the sink when it could be reused. Much to my surprise there was never a still moment.

Then there was the issue of standards and trying to teach to the specifications outlined within the state of Oregon. Since Visual Arts classes were electives, I did not have to administer a standards-based test. I didn't actually have the pressure of meeting academic standards. However, there were standards outlined through Disciplined Based Arts Education

(DBAE)⁴ for Visual Arts and I did want to do my best to achieve them. I attempted to include history, aesthetics, production and critique in each lesson but I lacked substantial background knowledge about art history to delve as deeply as I would have liked. I also found that critique was difficult to conduct when I didn't know the best questions to ask, effective activities to involve the students or how to lead meaningful discussions. This meant most of the class time was spent in production and that the other areas of DBAE were underdeveloped. I hoped that these deficiencies would minimize over time as I would become more familiar with how to teach to them.

My Artistic Identity at the End of the School Year

I believe my strongest character traits have always been creativity and the ability to prioritize my obligations. In the 1999-2000 school year, my priority became my teaching career. Since I was a creative person, almost everything I did had some artistic influence. Thus, teaching became my art.

I spent many hours creating my curriculum resources so students could visualize the concepts that were being taught. I made posters and I designed bulletin boards that related to current studies in an attempt to capture students' interest. All this took time and drained my artistic energy. But I realized the effort applied would allow more time for other endeavors in the future. I also knew that in ensuing years I would have many student exemplars along with my own to share when teaching specific lessons.

My art revolved around creating lessons I felt I could effectively teach. As a result, my curriculum became typically design-oriented. I believed that students enjoyed working in design because when I did introduce realistic drawing, they appeared more apprehensive about the assignment. Likewise, at the time I was apprehensive about it as well. My own art education had taught me very limited concepts to the basics of art. So when I learned about the elements and principles of design from a handout I found in my mentor teacher's filing

⁴ Disciplined Based Arts Education (DBAE) is a conceptual framework which is a method of teaching and learning that allows students to study visual works of art from the following four discipline perspectives: Production – creating art; History - encountering the historical and cultural background of works of art; Aesthetics - discovering the nature and philosophy of art; and Criticism - making informed judgments about the art. The focus is on the inquiry method of teaching and learning that emphasizes higher order critical thinking skills. Students are encouraged to analyze, synthesize, explain, justify, criticize and make critical judgments about the works of art being studied.

cabinet, I decided that developing my curriculum around such concepts would offer me and the students a comfortable and effective grounding to beginning art. Through the elements and principles of design, I could efficiently teach some of the aspects of art I wished I had been taught.

For example, it wasn't until the second semester of my first year of teaching when I initially analyzed the colorwheel. I found a poster of a colorwheel when I was cleaning out Dan Johnson's art room. Maybe I had seen a colorwheel before but I had never thought about how it worked. Once I read the information on the poster, I decided my painting units could easily refer to the colorwheel and the use of color as an element of design.

I had a degree in Fine Arts and yet had never learned about the colorwheel or how to draw a human face. It wasn't until my student teaching experience when I first discovered that in life drawing, eyes were actually drawn in the center of the human head. Hair created the illusion that the eyes were placed higher. I may have felt apprehensive about drawing realistically because I had not been taught aspects such as this. Teaching Visual Arts encouraged me to develop my drawing skills to ensure my students would not endure this same lack of basic knowledge.



It was difficult to understand why my own teachers had not introduced to me many of the most fundamental aspects of art. Perhaps this was because I didn't take any art classes in primary or high school. By the time I was in college, the teachers probably assumed this material had already been covered. Regardless, I still couldn't help but feel that my inadequacies were the result of inefficient, unaware or disinterested Visual Arts teachers throughout my college education. I had to teach myself much of what I needed to know to fill in the gaps when the knowledge was missing. Consequently, resentment towards my educators began to build.

When I became a teacher, I discovered my drawing and painting knowledge, techniques and skills were considerably poor. I had passion and a good eye which allowed me to feel comfortable with collaging but only after I became an art teacher did I begin to understand

how much I needed to learn in order to teach effectively. I wanted my students to achieve a thorough understanding of art - one that I felt I could have benefited from. Ultimately, I realized that becoming an art teacher would improve me as an artist.

Conclusion

Entering the field of education and becoming a first year teacher at the turn of the century was definitely a time in my life that will not be forgotten. I went through several transitions during that year. I moved from Oregon to California and back to Oregon again. For the first time in my life I started to receive a regular paycheck, had my own health insurance and began accumulating a retirement fund. I even ended a five-year relationship with my fiancé!

During this time, technology was becoming more prevalent within society and as a result the culture of learning and teaching in both California and Oregon underwent many changes. In California, people began finding high paying employment opportunities in the field of technology. As a result, California began experiencing an escalating shortage of teachers while the pupil population continued to grow at rapid rates. In Oregon, the 1998-99 cohort of new teacher licensees, of which I was one, was impacted by the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission and Oregon's Department of Education's transition to a new computer system. In addition, Southern Oregon University was simultaneously adjusting to a new teacher licensure program, which would now incorporate a full school year of practicum experience for its preservice students.

The Y2K scare was yet another technology related concern. Information Technology companies around the world spent billions of dollars to go through their entire application source code to look for the Y2K bug and fix it. Many people raced around to make themselves Y2K compliant before the fast approaching deadline. However, when the clock stroked midnight on New Years 2000 no major problems were reported. As a Computer Graphics and Data Processing teacher during the new millennium, I felt fortunate to take advantage of teaching opportunities that were related to this moment in time.

Although I experienced my share of challenges, this first year of teaching was filled with many opportunities that allowed me to grow as a teacher and connect with my students the way I wished my teachers would have connected with me. My transition into a teaching career

might not have been easy but my desire to do the best I could, dedication to my students and determination to make my career choice a success persevered. By maintaining confidence that each year would improve with experience and by nurturing a consistent resiliency towards any immediate confliction, I eventually became the confident and competent teacher I aspired to be.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Taking a Closer Look at the Teaching Profession

Introduction

When I first entered the teaching profession I was not employed as a Visual Arts teacher, nor did I have much energy or time to dedicate to my personal artistic practice. However, my artistic capabilities naturally emerged allowing me to still consider myself both artist and teacher within the classroom. This led me to ask the question: is teaching in itself a form of art (Stanley, 2007)? Elliot Eisner proposes, and I concur, that the aim of education should turn towards the revolutionary idea that teachers are artists who artistically prepare other artists. Regardless of the domain in which an individual works, artists are “individuals who have developed the ideas, the sensibilities, the skills and the imagination to create work that is well proportioned, skillfully executed and imaginative” (Eisner, 2003:376). For teachers to design the curriculum, create an environment conducive to learning and be responsive to students’ demands, the distinctive forms of thinking needed to create artistically crafted work are necessary (Eisner 2003). Becoming a teacher, like an artist creating a collage, requires “sensibility, imagination, technique, and the ability to make judgments about the feel and significance of the particular” (Eisner, 2002:382).

Both artists and early career teachers are inspired to fulfill a vision. But to make a vision become a reality, a journey must be traveled. In this chapter, we travel the journey of emerging teachers, looking specifically at the unique transitions encountered by recently qualified Visual Arts teachers. While this study supports Eisner’s view that teachers are artists, it also looks specifically at artists who now see themselves as teachers (Stanley, 2006).

Transitions to a Career in Teaching

Why Teach?

I often create for idealistic reasons. I have a passion for art. I believe my ideas are imaginative and I possess a desire to be productive. For many entering the teaching profession, similar ideals are also evident (Stanley, 2007). They may possess a love of children and learning, imagine a better world or desire an opportunity to assist young people to be productive citizens within society (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 2004). In many instances, early career teachers are idealistic and naturally inspired. They

view their new career as an opportunity to continue the learning process, to consider new ideas or ways of thinking and to work in an environment that will utilise their skills and abilities.

Many are attracted to the idea of working with children, influencing them in positive ways, discovering that their teaching has changed someone's life (Barone, 2001) and wish to give something back to the community (Chambers, 2002). Such altruistic and intrinsic benefits can affect feelings of self-esteem by offering a sense of satisfaction in helping others. Although it may not be considered the most important reason for entering a career in teaching (Manuel & Brindley, 2005), a salary, the abbreviated working calendar and long-term employment security are also appealing extrinsic rewards to the profession (Serow, 1993). Similar to me, preservice teacher participants within Chambers' (2002) study additionally anticipated employment with a pension, a measure of financial security through regular hours, the potential of more time for oneself through holidays and the summer break and a less constricting work environment typical of business and industry. The benefits of a teaching career are inviting, as is the comfort of having already spent several years as a student in the classroom setting.

However, the familiarity of the classroom environment and prior relationships with teachers might also contribute to an adverse reaction. Reasons for not selecting teaching as a first career may be influenced by past experiences and a myriad of personal issues. The relatively low earning power and status of teachers also deter many who might otherwise be attracted to the profession (Crow, Levine & Nager, 1990). Even so, those who do not select teaching as a first choice may later make a conscious decision towards teaching, realising it could be better than they originally thought.

Why Do Artists Turn to a Teaching Career?

This research looks at self-proclaimed artists who have turned to teaching during varying stages of their lives. Whether it is a first, second, or perhaps even third choice as a career, it is evident that there are several reasons why people turn to teaching. But are there particular reasons why artists become teachers (Stanley, 2006)?

Shuler (1996) offers a simple explanation: "Many artists seeking refuge from starvation find financial security in teaching" (p.11). Karttunen (1998) and Trasforini (1994)

acknowledge that art practice often corresponds negatively with western society's typical conception of work as gainful employment and claim such an occupation is rarely followed full-time, hardly ever guarantees a living and commonly requires multiple job-holding. Teaching on the other hand, is often perceived as a stable career that offers satisfaction for personal growth, individual creativity and intellectual challenge (Chambers, 2002). Artists may view teaching as an opportunity to employ creativity whilst developing their ideas and artistic imagination within the classroom context. However, my personal experience as an early career teacher and research conducted by Rush (1995) demonstrates that a career in teaching seldom provides enough time for artists to practice their personal art at a professional level. Teaching may constitute steady employment but in what ways will that change the artist's identity?

Making the Commitment to a Teaching Career

Establishing an identity as a teacher is time consuming and requires commitment. Teachers need to be prepared to address the substantial diversity experienced in students. These may include a range of languages, cultures, exceptionalities, learning styles and talents. Yet they must also be responsible for evaluating student strengths, styles, needs and developing effective representations of subject matter and knowledge (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996). Despite stereotypical depictions that little is needed to be learnt when becoming a teacher because one already has prior school experience to build upon (Cole & Knowles, 1993), entering the field of education and preparing to be a teacher is quite complex.

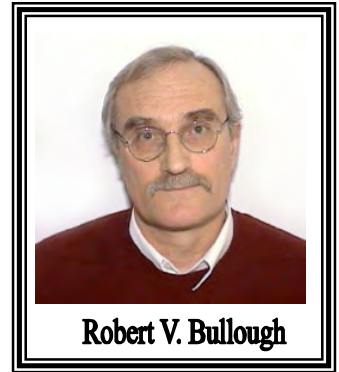
The necessary training and education demands an extensive amount of time and energy. For example, the case study participants within this research received their Secondary Visual Arts teaching qualifications from the University of Sydney in New South Wales, Australia. The Primary and Secondary Education degrees offered by the Faculty of Education and Social Work required fulltime attendance over two calendar years for the postgraduate Master of Teaching (MTeach) degree, and one and a half years for the Bachelor of Teaching (BTeach). This was after completion of an initial degree.

Through education, students may meet the requirements to earn their teacher qualifications but upon completion, employment is not guaranteed. The journey has only begun.

Seeking Employment

As I read *Emerging as a Teacher* by Bullough, Knowles and Crow (1991), it was disheartening to think of the experiences that some qualified teachers endured as they exited their preservice programs:

Following preservice education, the 'teacher' is dropped by his or her professors on to the job market and only rarely is there any attempt to help with placement... Instead, like the current tendency among American businesses, virtually all capital resources are put into achieving short-term gains, which are often those most easily attained but of least importance or enduring in value... (p.188)



Over fifteen years have passed since the publication date of this book, yet perhaps little has changed within many westernised educational systems. How will the Australian early career teacher participants within this study view their transitions from preservice to inservice? Will these participants even reach the status of fulltime employment within their first year of being qualified teachers?

As an artist, I may have brilliant ideas for a collage and all the capability I need to carry out the activity but how will I be able to create without the necessary supplies? Similarly, how will the early career teacher teach without a job? Preparation must take place. In designing a collage, it takes effort and knowledge to know what type of images to look for, what colours and textures to select and where to go to find them. Likewise, it takes responsibility, organisation and persistence to search, apply and interview for a fulltime teaching position. The artist, like the teacher, must develop and implement a plan if goals are to be achieved. And still, although these obstacles may be overcome, occasionally some supplies are not in stock and one must await their arrival.

I have come to discover that first year Visual Arts teachers often experience difficulty gaining placement within a school as fulltime employees in their own subject area. As a result, they might be asked to teach a subject that is not specifically art related. Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996) spoke of teachers in general being asked to teach outside their field of expertise. The researchers reported one in five public school teachers in the United States were not teaching in the area for which they felt best qualified. The Australian Secondary Principals' Association (ASPA) demonstrated that this is an international concern. A survey conducted by ASPA in 2007 explained that one of the key stressors of beginning teachers was that they were often "placed under extra pressure by having to

provide classroom instruction in unfamiliar subject or year level contexts” (p.2). Responses to this survey also indicated that a concerning 27% of early career Australian teachers were not only teaching outside their area of expertise but that they were frequently teaching more than one subject for which they were not trained.

While there is a strong need for secondary teachers (Manuel & Hughes, 2006), Visual Arts teachers are not in great demand (Luftig, Donovan, Farnbaugh, Kennedy, Filicko & Wyszomirski, 2003). Many schools may employ only one Visual Arts teacher and once in the position, that teacher may remain there for several years. Artists who have turned to careers in teaching might soon discover their Visual Arts teaching qualifications do not necessarily entail the employment they envisioned. If first year Visual Arts teachers are not flexible with their initial job placements and accepting of teaching subjects outside their field of expertise, initial employment opportunities may lead to casual teaching.

The artist might need to order supplies and await their arrival but with patience and persistence, eventually the materials will arrive. After graduation from my preservice teacher education program, I initially found fulltime employment as a Data Processing and Computer Graphics teacher, although I was qualified to teach Visual Arts. However, by the second semester of my first year of teaching I was employed into the more desirable position as a fulltime Visual Arts teacher. The determined artist and first year teacher practice perseverance to achieve their visions. Nonetheless, as research attests, the challenges will continue as more obstacles are yet to be overcome.

The Challenging First Year

Much emphasis has been placed on the first year of teaching since many researchers believe this year is the most important component in the process of becoming a competent teacher (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 2006; Manuel, 2003; Anderson, 2002; Urzua, 1999; Gratch, 1998; Schiller, 1992). Unexpected experiences in the transition from preservice education student to inservice professional may affect how classroom teachers respond to their new career.

For several decades, research has repeatedly described the first year of teaching as a jolting experience (Ryan, 1970) or a type of ‘reality shock’ (Chepyator-Thomson & Liu, 2003; Cole & Knowles, 1993; Bullough, 1989; Veenman, 1984). Maloch, Flint, Eldridge, Harmon, Loven, Fine, Bryant-Shanklin and Martinez (2003) reported that “[n]ovices often experience ‘transition shock’ as they move from teacher preparation to the reality of the classroom and have difficulty transferring what they have learned from the university to their classrooms” (p.435; see also Corcoran, 1981). Coles and Knowles (1993) suggested that because early career teachers’ images of their



new profession are typically either a composite of past experiences or based on memorable individuals or events, the images do not generally hold true within the reality of contemporary contexts. “Often these images shatter against the hard realities and complexities of schools, classrooms, and day-to-day teaching” (Coles & Knowles, 1993:459). Ten years later, Farrell (2003) continued with this notion and referred to the first year of teaching as a ‘sink-or-swim experience’ (see also Hansen & Wentworth, 2002; Bullough, et al., 1991). He indicated that the transition from preservice to professional educator becomes characterised as a type of reality shock because ideals that may have been formed during teacher training become replaced by the reality of school life. What can complicate this ‘shock’ is the perceived need to appear competent and confident. Pioneer researcher on such ‘transition shock,’ Ellen Corcoran (1981), described the first year teacher’s paradox as a feeling of insecurity and tentativeness on one hand and the teacher’s need to act decisively and be in control on the other.

In a study conducted by Bullough and Young (2002), first career and career changing teachers described their initial experiences in the classroom as difficult, challenging, often frustrating, ever-exhausting and always busy. The 16 participants of this study characterised their journey as having extreme emotional lows, times of profound self-doubt and uncertainty; but also remarkable highs when they felt they could do and accomplish anything. Overall, a sense of growing confidence was identified by the participants involved.



For many, the first year of teaching is not necessarily perceived as unpleasant. For some beginning teachers it may come as a welcoming surprise to discover they *can* teach, that they like what they are doing and that students do respect them. For many young adults entering their first career, teaching produces gratifying results towards being autonomous adults, being treated like adults and even getting paid for it (Ryan, 1970)⁵.

Whether unpleasant or joyous, the first year of teaching is an intense learning experience for all. One of these learning experiences may include the surprising discovery that the official role in the classroom does not always permit the luxury of being oneself. Emerging teachers often discover that they need to ascertain a suitable persona, a new teacher identity (Ryan, 1970). Whilst forming this teacher identity, they will test different conceptions of themselves, some of which their school culture may thrust upon them as they “seek an identity allowing them to be themselves, to act consistently and purposefully in the classroom and to usefully frame and address problems” (Bullough & Baughman, 1993:91). Bullough and Young (2002) attest, “Even when the first year of teaching is judged successful, it is a trying time, one that tests the beginning teacher’s competence, commitment to teach and conceptions of self” (p.418).

Additional causes that may potentially diminish the nurturing and interpersonal attitude of novice teachers might include large class sizes, the relentless drain of energy and unappreciative audiences (Hansen & Wentworth, 2002). Teaching is onerous, even with the personal or professional rewards it offers. As a result, these factors can ultimately contribute to the attrition of good people trying to do quality work.

As seen from my concerns and the concerns of others, there has been growing interest in learning why teachers are choosing to leave the profession so early in their careers, especially after the investment of four or more years in tertiary education preparing for it (Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Manuel, 2003; Gold, 1996). Recent reports have concluded teacher shortages are primarily caused by early attrition (Latham & Vogt, 2007; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). These reports have found that professional development opportunities and early career induction significantly and positively affect how long teachers remain in the

⁵ Much of today’s research regarding early career teaching transitions has its roots in studies conducted during the late 1960s/early 70s. I refer to such ‘older’ texts when they are the original source in providing pertinent reference to what is currently being studied.

profession (Latham & Vogt, 2007). Manuel and Hughes (2006) and Gold (1996) provide evidence that programs organised to meet early career teachers' psychological and professional needs have clearly led to greater satisfaction, productivity and lower attrition rates. However, still to be considered are the results of Cochran-Smith's (2004) study which confirmed many new teachers leave the profession within five years not only due to a lack of support *but also* because they are dissatisfied with low salaries, experience major difficulties with student discipline and are given little opportunity to participate in decision making. Additionally, research conducted by Ewing and Manuel (2005) reported that the most significant reason for early resignation was the beginning teacher's overwhelming workload. In contrast, Nieto (in Cochran-Smith, 2004) and Ewing and Manuel (2005) suggest that teachers who decide to stay in the profession often do so because they love, believe in and respect the students they work with and can imagine possibilities for them that are better than the dire circumstances in which some of them may currently live.



Unfortunately, the casualties in teaching have shown many commendable individuals falling victim to the process (Latham & Vogt, 2007; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Manuel, 2003; Hansen & Wentworth, 2002). As mentioned in the self-narrative, my friend Melinda served as prime example of this reality. I considered Melinda a superb artist, a compassionate teacher and a committed person; yet the unexpected challenges she encountered in her beginning years of teaching led her to leave the profession. Her decision provoked me to research early career teaching so that I might better prepare and inform future Visual Arts teachers for the journey that lies ahead.



Unique Challenges for Visual Arts Teachers

Besides the many hurdles involved with a transition to a teaching career, Visual Arts teachers must also confront their own unique challenges. Such challenges are often

concerned with their knowledge and ideals about art and art teaching (Cohen-Evron, 2002). Visual Arts teachers' understandings about art and how art should be taught is a combination of their own beliefs as well as those created by the several encounters throughout their lives.

Challenge: Politics

These beliefs may be in contrast to those currently promoted in government. Donnelly's (2005) controversial report for Australian education stated that the country needs to emphasise summative assessment and have less emphasis on constructivism. By adopting a syllabus approach to education, the report recommended that there be a greater focus on formal, whole-class teaching, particularly teacher-directed activities. However, current approaches to Visual Arts education completely contradict such propositions. This dichotomy could be very confusing for many teachers.

For example, in 2003 the field saw a movement towards a Reggio approach to Visual Arts education. Reggio Emilia is a city located in northern Italy in the Reggio Romagna region which continues to be recognised as the best early childhood program in the world (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2003). Reggio views children as powerful, capable, curious and full of potential. The approach utilises an artist-in-residence along with child-centred activities to shape the curriculum, opposing political movements towards a teacher-centred approach. Teachers listen to the ideas of the students and construct a curriculum that encompasses their current interests and needs (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2003).

Those who consider themselves constructivists would emphasise the process of artmaking, placing importance on creativity and the continuous reconstruction of conceptual and rational schema (Haynes, 2004). Yet, Australian education bodies, including the New South Wales Board of Studies, are aiming for a standard that will ensure curriculum descriptors are measurable (Andrews, 2003). Although the NSW Board of Studies does not mandate pedagogy, an emphasis on summative assessment does deny the importance of intention and instead places it on the outcomes achieved rather than on one's reasons for acting. Thus the end product is that which tends to be evaluated, not the initiating force. As a consequence, "the surface behaviour is what counts for assessment rather than the personal engagement with the work and the student-teacher relation becomes one of cause and effect rather than a personal engagement" (Haynes, 2004:31).

The NSW Board of Studies requires “teachers to articulate more explicitly than ever before the link between syllabus, course work and assessment” (Andrews, 2003:40). Looking at this positively, Andrews (2003) indicates that Visual Arts teachers in New South Wales are finding the marking guidelines as outlined in the standard referenced approach to be an effective way to determine student achievement especially due to the subjective, personal nature of the artmaking content. However, Andrews (2003) also argues that deconstructing syllabus terminologies is something that needs to be accomplished more successfully if students are to perform to their potential.

Aligned with the Reggio approach, Hermann (2005) believes that students lose the desire to apply concepts and extract meaning when information presented to them is outcomes-based, teacher determined and prescribed. He argues that Visual Arts lessons “should encourage student investigation, exploration, and discovery of the many contexts and ideas presented in [art] rather than mandate ideas to be explored and the manner in which to address them” (p.43). To do this, teachers must have the knowledge to lead discussions and the ability to design and implement meaningful lessons. They need to be familiar with art history and contemporary art in order to present pertinent examples of artists who have dealt with applicable issues in a variety of ways (Hermann, 2005). A question concerning this study asks, where and how do Visual Arts teachers gain this knowledge?

Olson (2003) also concurs with Hermann and the Reggio approach and emphasises that the primary concern should be what a student is thinking while creating art. Olson wrote of teachers she had witnessed giving their students direction on how to draw the human figure *correctly*. Another teacher set up a still life with a direct light on white objects and then proceeded to instruct students to pay close attention to the gradation of values on the objects when they drew them. In reference to these teacher-directed lessons, Olson concluded, “Normally one would find this totally inappropriate pedagogy and difficult to believe, but indeed it actually took place” (p.36). Perhaps a student-centred approach to Visual Arts education is appropriate in some instances but I disagree with Olson’s argument since I believe that it should not be the *only* approach taken.

Through my experience in Visual Arts education both as a student and as a teacher, I have come to recognise a balance between student-centred and teacher-centred activity as most beneficial for learning. The majority of my Visual Arts education was student-centred and

as a result, I became rather frustrated with my personal theoretical knowledge base. I was disappointed that I graduated with a Fine Arts degree with no knowledge of a colourwheel. I was never encouraged to consider the proportions of a human body or taught how light sources cast shadows on objects. Over the years, I have discovered how necessary this knowledge is in order to feel competent in my artistic ability, especially when expected to lead discussions and implement Visual Arts lessons. I believe students do need teacher guidance and require a certain degree of instruction. Otherwise, they might become discouraged. Personally, I wish I had been taught how to draw the human figure *correctly* during my years of studying Visual Arts. Sometimes the rules need to be learnt properly so that we can better understand how to break them (Brown, 1991).

What Hermann (2005) cautions teachers to consider are the constraints on students' discovery and the construction of ideas when artmaking activities are heavily teacher-directed and scripted. Even if teachers are more socially aware, multicultural and politically sensitive, their ideas may be presented as truths to be handed down to students. This study seeks to clarify how the early career teacher participants within this research view their own Visual Arts education and the ways in which they relate their student experiences to the formation of their teaching identities.

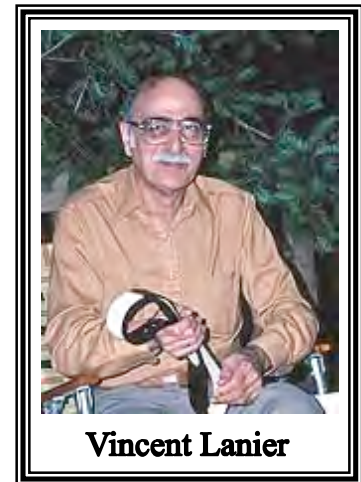
Challenge: Personal Experience

It is not easy for beginning teachers, particularly Visual Arts teachers, to effectively connect what they learnt in university courses to real teaching situations (Kowalchuk, 1999). Visual Arts teachers often select artists or art periods that they themselves prefer, or they teach a curriculum that is similar to the one they experienced in school (Heise, 2004). When they rely on earlier art education experiences or perhaps turn to art history texts for information about artists and works of art, it does not assist in successfully developing instructional strategies, nor does it help beginning teachers connect studio processes to art meanings (Kowalchuk, 1993). After university, early career teachers must maintain a responsibility to keep informed on contemporary practice, address the conditions in which they teach while questioning and understanding the experiences of the current youth generation. For example, contemporary practice encourages teachers to include the contextual study of popular cultural production that until recently, Visual Arts education tended to ignore. As professionals, teachers should be expected to commit to on-going professional learning in order to respond to the social changes, technological

advancements and developments in the knowledge base of pedagogy and the field of Visual Arts (Parliament of Australia House of Representatives, 2007).

Challenge: The All-Encompassing Curriculum

In the late 1950s, Vincent Lanier became one of the earliest and most strident advocates for the inclusion of popular culture in art education as a means towards social change. He recognised a division between adult conceptions of art and the students' attentiveness to popular culture and recommended Visual Arts educators move beyond the confines of fine art and art production towards critical thinking and cultural understanding. Lanier suggested Visual Arts teachers acknowledge the



pedagogical import of popular culture in order to value students' knowledge, make curricula meaningful and relevant to them and avoid subjugating their experiences (Tavin, 2005a).

It is appropriate here to clarify that popular culture in art refers to the works one sees as aesthetically familiar, whose purposes involve pleasure, entertainment and escape and are readily accessible through the family, community and peer group. In contrast, fine art is less accessible and is distinguished by a self-conscious attention to its own artistic language (Efland, 2004). Many works of fine art originate in other times and places and often require knowledge of less familiar contexts for understanding. "Students lacking acquaintance with the fine arts, especially works in the modern or postmodern genres, will not be capable of finding meaning in these works without educational mediation" (Efland, 2004:245). Again, this stresses the link between one's education in Visual Arts and how one will teach it.



About a decade after Lanier's voice was heard, June King McFee also began recommending the study of popular culture but as an effective means to cultivate a discriminating aesthetic taste in defence against its influence. Despite their differing perspectives, both McFee and Lanier were addressing the social construction of the visual environment long before the rise of visual culture as a distinct field of study (Tavin, 2005a). In response to the demands of the

world outside the classroom, Lanier and McFee's work helped posit popular culture images as legitimate objects of study in Visual Arts education. "Thus, teaching visual culture today allows for a different type of analysis than in the past, one that can draw from new and newly emerging images, technologies, and cultural experiences" (Tavin, 2005a:17).

Tavin (2005a) explains, "Statements in favor of the shift towards visual culture in art education often build upon claims for the inclusion of popular culture in art education curricula" (p.7). He clarifies that popular culture and visual culture are not one in the same and cautions educators not to conflate the two. Popular culture refers to the daily, vernacular, common, cultural environment surrounding us and includes TV, cinema, the food we eat and the clothes we wear. Visual culture represents both a field of study and an inclusive register of images and objects well beyond the popular.



Hicks (2004) looks to the potentialities contained in popular culture and the ways in which human creative endeavours show up in contexts and venues that traditional art education has tended to marginalise. She believes art education has an obligation to consider the ways in which art effects and is affected by the broader social world in which it exists. Her research articulates a view of art education that addresses the importance of understanding the diversity of human visual culture within appropriate social and political contexts.

However, new movements tend to be followed by debate. Efland (2005) supports two arguments against the implementation of visual culture studies: i) the number of genres covered by programs in visual culture can become unmanageable in the time allotted for teaching the arts; and ii) the belief that there is no pre-established hierarchy that accords privileged standing to certain objects such as those considered to be fine art. A visual culture curriculum purports to place all objects equally, avoiding an elitism that favours certain kinds of art above the rest. Efland (2005) argues that many cultures in their collective judgment *do* consider certain works to be more important than others, and the reasons for these judgments might include religion, civic or aesthetic value and may involve issues of power.

Until the advent of this movement, the fine arts were deemed the central core of the Visual Arts curriculum. The hierarchy that once placed fine art at the top and popular culture at the bottom has now largely been abandoned. The Visual Arts curriculum has opened itself to a broader array of content as traditional ties to drawing, painting and the study of masterpieces are lessened to make room for the study of visual culture (Efland, 2005).

To summarise, one side of the continuum views the major purpose for education in the arts is to study the aesthetic experiences they offer. The rival position identifies the mission of Visual Arts education as the exploration and analysis of visual culture, primarily popular culture, which thereby helps students discern social contextual influences that affect their daily lives. Efland (2004, 2005) recommends educators take a middle position in their theoretical focus stating, “The procedures and criteria [teachers] use for the critical understanding and judgment of artworks should include the discussion of aesthetic elements as well as discussion of the social context represented in such works” (p.234). Including both aspects within one curriculum would emphasise the discursive practices found in the fine arts community and in the criticism of popular culture.

Agreeing with Efland, Hicks (2004) also encourages Visual Arts teachers to extend their curriculum by engaging with aesthetic practices and visual forms that not only fall under headings such as fine art or folk art but also include other cultural forms. These forms may include tattooing, graffiti, video games, zines and fashion, as well as the images and aesthetic processes that make up the world of television, film and the internet. By addressing such forms, students engage key features of their own lived experience while at the same time exploring realms outside the familiar (Hicks, 2004). Newer technologies in modern society now play the principal role in shaping knowledge and beliefs once occupied by religion, the school, the community and the family, making the study of visual culture educationally important (Efland, 2004).

By encouraging students to think critically about the visual culture of which they are a part, and how these images and texts relate to one another, students can gain an understanding of how they are influenced and how they themselves can influence. This process is an important part of being not only an artist, but also an aware and active participant in society. (Hermann, 2005:44-45)

Addressing the concept of popular culture in the classroom in further detail, Duncum (2004) reminds us that cultural forms such as television and the internet involve more than visual images as a communicative mode. Much of their meaning is made through an

interaction of music, the spoken voice, sound effects, language and pictures. For popular culture to properly achieve relevance to contemporary social practice, Visual Arts education would also need to embrace interaction between such communicative modes.

Challenge: Exemplars and Mimicry

A stated purpose of art education is to move students beyond antediluvian modes of guided direction, passive spectatorship and superficial aesthetic understandings towards more generative and thoughtful forms of cultural production and resistance, helping students make meanings of, and creatively respond to, their experiences (Darts, 2004). This challenges Visual Arts teachers to discuss contemporary art as well as art from the past in such a way that ideas are questioned and ways of communicating are considered, borrowed or discarded, rather than in a way that encourages the reproduction of projects without adequate critical examination that calls into question its content or context (Hermann, 2005).

However, when students are expected to reach a standard, they can experience difficulty relating their determined expectations to their individual ideas, feelings, values and beliefs. To visually assist students' understanding, Visual Arts teachers often select exemplars to share with their class. But once again, the Visual Arts teacher is faced with another challenge. Andrews (2003) explains:

The fact that [exemplars] are concrete and chosen at a particular point in time, and may incorporate elements of fashion, cultural tradition, or current technology, virtually ensures that they go out of date. Another problem, which may arise from using exemplars, is that they may encourage students to merely mimic them and thus inhibit creativity, as permissible variations go unexplored. (p.39)

Andrews (2003) mentions teachers can generate their own collection of exemplars by retaining student artworks that typify standards. However, a first year teacher might not have such past submissions to share. As a beginning teacher, I spent much time making my curriculum projects, not only so there would be an exemplar to share with my students but also so I could gain further familiarity with the concepts, procedures and media myself.

Challenge: Controversial Awareness

If we conceptualize teaching as needing to meet not only the academic but also the societal and everyday needs of students, then there exists a certain obligation to address issues and themes relevant to students' lives (Zander, 2004:51). However, many topics relevant to

students' lives are controversial and teachers do not always know how to appropriately approach them. To begin with, teachers need to responsibly question whether they have the knowledge, training or even the right to address students about their issues or beliefs.

Zander (2004) asks, "How does one create an environment in the art classroom that is friendly to student opinion and welcomes self-expression while maintaining educational purpose" (p.51)? With objectives, assessment and relatively small time allotments, the standard curriculum leaves little room for creating dialogical relationships. Therefore, to create an environment that will support the possibility of such dialogue, a variety of factors, such as openness and respect, will need to consistently work together to communicate a message of safety and trustworthiness (Zander, 2004).

The concept of a safe and harmonious environment can easily become challenged in the art room (Cohen-Evron, 2005). When teachers engage in dialogue regarding unpleasant and difficult issues such as political or racial conflicts, they create confronting situations. However, when topics selected for study deal with controversial social issues and encourage pupils to explore such issues when producing their own work, the art teacher makes the classroom relevant to the lives of the students (Tavin, 2005b; Hermann, 2005). Such lessons provide opportunity to gain an informed awareness of the social forces that oppress lives, confine growth and defile dreams (Tavin, 2005b). But often this causes both students and teachers to face moral conflict in their own reality. As a result, racial, ethnic, gender, religious or social class conflicts are frequently ignored by art educators who opt to avoid such risks and therefore deal not with the lack of knowledge but with the resistance to knowledge (Cohen-Evron, 2005).

In Summary

Students possess a diversified set of values, beliefs and levels of understanding about art (Simpson, 1995). Conversely, early career Visual Arts teachers take on new meanings and develop new identities regarding their understanding and process of producing art as they are no longer students but teachers of the subject. In addition to these challenges, Visual Arts teachers also need to consider their budget, space, class size and time allotments (Brewer, 2002) that are typically predetermined and uncontrollable aspects of their work. The political and educational policy decisions that drive the school system and its curricular choices, and the diversified personalities that make up a class, create the realities

that impact the transitions of Visual Arts teachers' work, attitudes and first year experience.

The Art of Transition

Teachers, like artists, discover certain realities of their craft through active engagement as the process unfolds before them and transitional elements become apparent. By the time I became a qualified Visual Arts teacher, I had already spent over eighteen years in the classroom receiving an education. What might appear a simple transition from student to professional teacher was actually a complicated, multifarious phenomenon. I had many ideals in place upon entering the profession. However, just weeks into my first teaching position, I began to experience a type of reality shock. By believing each year would improve with experience, I eventually adapted to my teacher identity and found the profession quite rewarding. In retrospect, the years 1999-2000 mark an epiphany to my life, as almost everything that I do today is a result of my entering a career in teaching.

The transition from student to working life has been described as an important milestone in many young people's journey to adulthood (OECD, 2000). Whether it is a first career choice, a second or even third, making the transition to a career in teaching requires the acquisition of new behaviours, knowledge and skills, and often involves a change in identity (Jorissen, 2003). Committing to this career and the strategy for pursuing it has often been viewed as difficult, gradual and uncertain (Plunkett, 2001).

Case study research conducted by Bullough, et al. (1991) followed the transitions of Larry and Nancy throughout the course of their first year of teaching. The study indicated several commonalities between these two beginning teachers including serious discipline and management issues (see also Ryan, 1970), problems with consistency and difficulties in providing a suitable and responsive curriculum for students. Many similarities can also be seen with my experience as described in the self-narrative and those encountered by Larry and Nancy. All three of us reported challenges in negotiating a productive and fitting teaching identity that in turn produced feelings of self-doubt and high vulnerability.

It was two weeks before the beginning of the school year when Larry was offered his first teaching position. The school he was to be teaching at was generally poor and considered 'tough'. The role Larry was to assume happened to be entirely different than the one he

sought to create. He was teaching classes he felt inexperienced in and the school lacked available resources. Larry felt his authority was challenged since he was continuously confronted with situations that demanded immediate responses. He found himself to be simply unprepared and unable to function as he had once imagined. Within three months, he began to question his career choice.

During Nancy's first days of teaching, she sought to make classes fun and approached the students by becoming 'buddies' with them. This was a decision she later came to regret. Nancy didn't want to discipline her students because she believed this would jeopardise her relationship with them. However, she soon began to feel the students controlled the class and in turn blamed them, claiming it was the students' fault she had difficulties.

Much of the research available on the stages of a beginning teacher's transition into a career in education has its roots in the late 1960s work of Francis Fuller. Fuller was interested in planning meaningful preservice programs for education students at the University of Texas-Austin (Fessler, 1995). By 1975, Fuller and Bown developed a sequence of concerns that described four general stages a novice teacher of any subject may encounter: i) preteaching concerns; ii) early concerns about survival; iii) teaching situations concerns; and iv) concerns about pupils. The sequence progressed from concerns for the self, to concerns regarding teaching tasks to finally concerns for the impact teaching had on students.

Drawing upon and extending the work of Fuller and Bown (1975), Ryan (1986) proposed that beginning teachers move through four distinguishable stages: i) fantasy stage; ii) survival stage; iii) mastery stage; and iv) impact stage. Bullough, et al. (1991) referred to Ryan's (1986) first three stages - fantasy, survival, and mastery - when analysing Larry and Nancy's early career teacher transitions. Both teachers had ideals in place when entering the profession. Larry imagined himself employed sooner, teaching subjects he was prepared to teach while Nancy desired to be her students' friend so that they would like her. This fantasy phase quickly diminished but the survival stage lasted until the year's end. Neither Larry nor Nancy reached the level of mastery within their first year of teaching.

In 1995, John Furlong and Trisha Maynard presented a more complex picture of teacher transitions and suggested that a novice teacher progresses through the following five stages:

1. *Early Idealism*: Beginning teachers strongly identify with the students while they reject the image of the older, cynical teacher.
2. *Survival*: Beginning teachers react to the reality shock of the classroom and feel overwhelmed by its complexity. Teachers want to survive with quick fix methods.
3. *Recognizing Difficulties*: Beginning teachers gain an awareness of the difficulties of teaching and start to recognise that teachers are limited in terms of what they can achieve. Teachers are in a self-doubt stage and wonder if they can make it as an educator.
4. *Reaching a Plateau*: Beginning teachers start to cope successfully with the routines of teaching. However, they also develop a resistance to trying new approaches and methods so as to not upset the newly developed routines. They are more focused on successful classroom management and less on student learning.
5. *Moving On*: Beginning teachers become more focused on the quality of student learning (Furlong & Maynard, 1995:12-13).



Furlong and Maynard (1995) indicate that the transition from student to teacher is rather complex, erratic and unique to the individual while dependent upon social interactions between students and colleagues, teacher education experiences and the school context in which they are employed. The researchers are careful to clarify that while they adopt the notion of ‘stages,’ they should not be viewed in a crude or simplistic way. It is indeed unnatural for humans to move smoothly along a simple, narrow continuum. Although Bullough, et al. (1991) refer to Ryan’s stages (1986) when analysing the participants within their case study research, they too are careful to mention that “the boundaries

separating the stages, especially the survival and mastery stages, are blurred, and their relationship is not obviously sequential” (p.76). Bullough and Baughman (1993) add, “When learning to teach, one encounters problems in clusters, not rows. Still, such schemes are useful albeit very rough means for making initial sense of some aspects of teacher development and for helping novice teachers to think about and perhaps better direct their learning” (p.94). Michael Huberman (1989) analysed the professional life cycle of teachers and also observed that such ‘sequences’ on the whole may illustrate a large number, often at times the majority, but never the totality of individuals. Huberman (1989) clarifies his view by stating:

Some people stabilise only to destabilise later on... Some may stabilise early, others later, and some never...Career development is thereby a process, not a series of events. For some, this process may be linear, but for others there will be plateaus, regressions, dead-ends, spurts, and discontinuities. So the identification of phases and sequences must be handled gingerly, as an analytic heuristic, as a descriptive rather than a normative construct. (p.32)

While deciphering teacher transitions through the explanations of stages, clusters, sequences or concerns, it is necessary to recognise inconsistencies amongst these descriptors regarding the phenomenon. For example, research conducted by Bullough and Young (2002) discovered evidence contrary to the work of Fuller and Bown (1975) and Furlong and Maynard (1995). While the novice teachers in this study were concerned about themselves and how the students perceived them, they were also just as equally concerned with their students’ learning. They “feared to the point of dread that their students would not do well on the end of the year test and would not be prepared for grade advancement” (p.428). While the novice teachers were shown to be experiencing self-doubt of the *Survival* and *Recognising Difficulties* stages, they were also experiencing aspects of the *Moving On* stage which turned the focus to the quality of student learning. This indicates that early career teachers do not necessarily pass through only one stage at a time but can potentially transition through different stages simultaneously.

Diamond and Mullen (1999) discuss how the term ‘teacher development’ is often used to refer to the changes or transitions that occur within a teaching career. These desirable and positive shifts may include increases in ability, skill, power, strength, wisdom, insight, virtue and/or happiness. However, the postmodernist researchers suggest that this development should also involve teacher learning that is self-directed, which cannot be imitated or imposed. As a result, what develops is a theory of a more effective teacher-self

who is constantly scrutinised, allowing for richer explanations of ongoing practice rather than a collection of treasured ‘tips.’ Arts-informed research challenges identification of transitional stages (Furlong & Maynard, 1995; Ryan, 1986; Fuller & Bown, 1975) and opts for teachers to learn and demonstrate the insights they gain through active involvement such as thinking about and articulating what they have learnt through their experiences. Diamond and Mullen (1999) attest, “A teacher’s self-movement is not relentlessly unilinear; it includes pauses and cyclic returns. Development proceeds in a manner other than as in a projectable curve like a cannon shot. Development cannot be ‘measured’ by using linear, rational tools” (p.68).

In relation to the elaborate social contexts of becoming a teacher, Brell (1990) draws attention to the work of Dewey (1909), *How We Think*, and the conditions that provoke ‘reflective thinking.’ Brell explains that Dewey’s book is often misconstrued as an attempt to outline a five-step model of inquiry but that Dewey issues constant reminders throughout his writing that the five-steps are neither linear, discrete nor restricted to five in number. When considering stages of teacher transitions, it is important to keep this same frame of reference in mind. Describing a considerable amount of detail involving dynamic processes and the conditions that elicit, regulate and sustain those processes (Brell, 1990) can be complicated without a model to follow. In the analysis of this study (Chapter 7 & Appendix A), Furlong and Maynard’s (1995) stages of teacher transition are utilised to help clarify meaning by grounding the data into a theoretical model. A critique on such a model and how it contributed to this research is also offered.

A research question concerning Maynard (2001) asked: How do ‘students’ become ‘teachers’ and what lies beneath their transitions of behaviour and concerns? The current study builds on Maynard’s question by becoming subject specific and focusing on how such transitions affect the identities of early career artist-teachers.

Conclusion

Within this chapter, several questions have been raised regarding the transitions Visual Arts teachers experience after graduation from a preservice teacher education program. The purpose of this arts-informed inquiry is to arouse particular feelings and images towards these concerns while provoking experiential learning.

Teachers, like artists, have developed their ideas, acquired the sensibilities, skills and imagination to conduct their work in a skilful and well-proportioned manner. Prior experience and education has contributed to the distinctive forms of thinking required to create their artistically crafted work. However, transitions within the process are inevitable.

It is possible to inform novice teachers about the transitions they may encounter. They can be made aware of a possible reality shock, urged to recognise that idealised beliefs might be traded in for more realistic representations and encouraged to develop resiliency. Ultimately, if early career teachers can learn to adapt and become flexible through difficult times and utilise support programs that may be available, satisfaction can be achieved and the potential for attrition might be reduced.

Because this study places emphasis on Visual Arts teachers, the next chapter details artist-teacher identity exploration. It discusses the use of narrative in offering examples of how life transitions become self-directed. In turn, a richer explanation for ongoing practice is offered.

CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW

Portraying the Identity

Creating an Identity

“Just as a career transition requires the acquisition of new behaviours and attitudes, it also involves a change in identity” (Jorissen, 2003:43). This change can be invigorating but it can also forge a confrontation with the self (Bullough & Young, 2002) as one’s competence, commitment and conceptions become tested. Incorporating perceptions of various skills, knowledge, abilities, values, experiences and motivations will undoubtedly create new aspects of the self (Jorissen, 2003). In addition, new relationships will emerge and interacting partners will shift. How one is treated by others can become critical during a career transition in terms of identity development. As a result, the first year teacher is challenged to protect a professional identity while attempting to preserve a perception of the self that may not be fully stable or secure (Bullough & Young, 2002).

Building a professional identity is similar to painting a self-portrait. Many variables including one’s culture, self-interests and emotions play a discerning role in the development of such a composition. Likewise, the creation of the emerging teacher’s identity will be influenced not only by the aforementioned aspects but by other variables including teacher preparation time, administrative support, collegiality, student behaviour, parental support and professional development opportunities (Henninger & Dodds, 2003). Fessler (1995) adds that personal and organisational environments may also have considerable impact. The personal environment would include family, individual dispositions, avocational interests and even life stages such as that of midlife crisis when individuals are sometimes preoccupied with questions about what they want to do with the rest of their lives. Among the variables impacting on the organisational environment of schools and school systems are school regulations, the management style of administrators and supervisors, the activities of professional organisations and associations, the presence or absence of public trust in a community, the expectations a community places on its educational system and the union atmosphere in the system.

In her 1930 commissioned artwork *Self-Portrait*, Margaret Preston reflects upon both the personal and organisational environments to develop her composition. Through the medium of paint, Preston identifies herself as a professional female artist in a then male dominated field. She symbolises this identity by creating a public statement of artistic positioning. “Subdued, simple and severe, Preston depicts herself as a central assemblage of cylindrical and stylised forms rising from the emphatic charcoal black base of her painting apron” (Mimmocchi & Edwards, 2005:107). Preston is simultaneously an artist and professional, and draws from her personal interests and emotions to portray this. The ways in which the artist-teachers of this study will ‘paint’ their ‘self-portrait’, will be a combination of what they do during their working hours as well as what they do outside those times. Their sense of identity within the school context influences their personal life. The two are interrelated (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997) and each aspect has a significant impact in understanding their career transitions.



Both Artist and Teacher

To establish ground for teachers to retain their own individual artistic practice, the title *artist-teacher* has become a relatively recent addition to the conceptual vocabulary of art education and professional teacher discourse (Adams, 2005). By maintaining and refreshing their creative activity as producers, Adams (2005) writes that artists can improve their effectiveness as teachers. However,

(t)he difficulty here is the assumption of a separation between art practice and art pedagogy: whether one can still practice as an artist despite practicing as a teacher. The idea of the artist-teacher is thus a problematic as well as an enabling concept. It presents a duality of practices: the artist repressed in the dominant discourse of pedagogy and institutional regulation, set up in opposition to the artist ‘liberated’ by external practices. Nevertheless the artist-teacher idea is a powerful one in art education, since it insists upon an idea that has its foundations in a broader field, and unites teacher with artistic practitioner within a single concept. (pp. 24-25)

Cynthia Hatfield, Valerie Montana and Cara Deffenbaugh were three artists who worked as teachers and found themselves struggling to be both. They realised that they were juggling issues common to many individuals in art education. So, in 2006 they conducted a study that grappled with the idea of how artist-teachers could define themselves. They studied the lives of 11 art teachers (at varying stages in their teaching careers) and asked

how they experienced their professional identities as art teachers and as artists. The majority of the participants reported that maintaining an artist identity was important even though their primary responsibility at work was to educate students rather than promote themselves as artists. But relying on memories of being an artist was not enough for the participants to feel secure in both roles. In order to maintain artist and teacher identities, situations needed to be created so that both roles could concurrently be validated.

Hatfield, et al. (2006) recognised that having the dual identity of artist and teacher could be an empowering experience for those who had that sense of calling, especially if it was reinforced by positive feedback within the school context. However, the lack of time and/or courage to create and show artwork, when coupled with a desire to do so, precipitated a major sense of failure and identity conflict for some of the participants in their study. In conclusion, the researchers found that individuals would i) allow one role to overtake the other; ii) integrate the two roles by bringing their artist identity into the classroom and calling themselves an artist-teacher; or iii) balance the roles by separating and pursuing them at different times and in different spaces through conscious management strategies.

My self-narrative acknowledges that I allowed my role as ‘teacher’ to overtake my role as ‘artist’ during my first year of teaching. I didn’t feel I had the time or energy to pursue both. However, I still identified with being an artist and could not avoid that aspect of my personality. I may not have acted as an artist on a professional realm creating works with the intention to exhibit but I did draw on my artistic abilities when designing and implementing my curriculum. This precarious balance between roles offered validation of my identity as a teacher and as an artist.

Exposing Identities

In the telling of my story through the self-narrative form, my identity as an artist becoming a teacher was revealed. The beliefs and attitudes that I possessed as an early career teacher were important considerations in understanding why other artists become teachers, what happens while they are becoming teachers and what their actions and attitudes are during this time. Narrative was a practical and natural means for me to communicate these experiences. However, it has been a long struggle in educational research for the use of narrative to be fully recognised and accepted.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the second half of the 20th Century saw the study of teachers begin to take a different approach to the prescriptive, rational means-end model that had prevailed in educational research for many years. Researchers MacDonald (1965) and Eisner (1967) began espousing the belief that teachers' behaviours were affected by what they think. Thus the ends for learning became integrated with the means for learning and the determination of goals prior to an activity became irrelevant. Clark and Yinger (1977) were among the first researchers who sought to understand "the uniquely human processes that guide and determine teacher behaviour" by learning more about "how teachers exercise judgment, make decisions, define appropriateness, and express their thoughts in their actions" (p.279-280). Their efforts attempted to close the gap between theory (intellect) and practice (art) by taking the general case and applying it to particular situations.

Due to criticisms that the narrative stresses the individual over the social context, initially there was only a relatively small community of supporters and respondents (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Arguments against narrative research claimed that experience was too comprehensive, too holistic and therefore an insufficient analytic tool to permit useful inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). To pursue elusive aspects of educational life through narrative was not common within an epistemological framework that sought 'best methods.' Since outcomes were difficult to measure and regulate, they did not lend themselves well to truth tests (Eisner, 1988) or to replication. Those in opposition to narrative inquiry believed only organisation and structure could be the appropriate starting points for social science research because experience could not speak for itself (Eisner, 1988).

These various objections, of course, contain elements of truth important to the study of experience. However "the metaphors by which teachers live, the way they construe their work, and the stories they recount, tell us more profoundly about what is going on in their lives as professionals than measured behaviours are likely to reveal" (Eisner, 1988:x). To comprehend what schools mean to those who spend a major portion of their lives there, it is more important to understand how people conceive their experiences rather than focus simply on what they do (Eisner, 1988).

By the late 1980s, D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, who were inspired by the work of Clark and Yinger, persisted with this educational framework and coined the term *personal practical knowledge*. They believed a person's practical knowledge was found in past experiences, the present mind and body and in a person's future plans and actions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). While the work of Clandinin and Connelly progressed, teacher knowledge eventually became viewed in terms of narrative life history, or as storied life compositions (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). These narratives of experience were both personal and social for they reflected the lives and contexts in which teachers lived. In furthering the development of narrative methodologies within educational research, Clandinin and Connelly (1998) eventually began to pay even closer attention to the ways knowledge was both formed and expressed. The researchers adopted the metaphor *professional knowledge landscape* to help capture the complexity of teachers' stories. The landscape served as a narrative construction, maintaining a history with moral, emotional and aesthetic dimensions. To enter this professional knowledge landscape was "to enter a place of story" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998:151).



D. Jean Clandinin



F. Michael Connelly

Cole and Knowles (2001a) confirm that there is an apparent, yet sometimes minute, diversity in the terminologies that describe research which involves studies of people's lives. In delineating the terms 'narrative' and 'story,' this study follows the distinctions outlined by Connelly and Clandinin (1990):

Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study. To preserve this distinction we use the reasonably well-established device of calling the phenomenon 'story' and the inquiry 'narrative.' Thus, we say that people by nature lead storied lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience. (p.2)

Narrative research focuses on the individual in hopes that life might be better understood through a recounting and reconstruction of one's story (Cole & Knowles, 2001a). To further emphasise the distinction between these two terms, Polkinghorne (1988) adds, "'Narrative' can refer to the process of making a story, to the cognitive scheme of the story, or to the result of the process" (p.13).

Today narrative inquiry, defined by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) as “a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying” (p.4), thrives within the social sciences (Chase, 2005). Many people now accept that there is more of a sense of a person living inside a story than there is of a person living inside a theory or an ideology (Connelly, et al., 1997). Contemporary narrative inquiry, which has been greatly supported by postmodernism, has come to be characterised “as an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them” (Chase, 2005:651).

People construct their selves through narrative and make sense of their lives through the telling of stories (Bruner, 1986). They reaffirm, modify and create new stories. These stories, as they are lived and told, educate the self and others (Conle, 2000). Believing in and supporting the unity of theory and practice, Dewey (1934, 1930, 1929) expresses the intimate and necessary relationship between education, experience and life: to study education is to study experience and the study of experience is the study of life.

Illustrating the Theory

Cole and Knowles (2001a) view Connelly and Clandinin as amongst the most influential for their writings on and examples of narrative method within educational research. Accordingly, this chapter consistently refers to the work of Connelly and Clandinin as it is their theory that illustrates the narrative process utilised within the current study.

In the late 80s, Connelly and Clandinin developed a list of terms to assist researchers in making sense of teacher knowledge. In terms of an experientially based educational theory, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) used the ideas of image, rules, principles, personal philosophy, metaphor, cycles, rhythms and narrative unities to illustrate the narrative process. Over the next decade, Connelly, Clandinin and He (1997) tied these ideas and terms together to develop a theory of narrative and storytelling. In the following passages, I will briefly outline each aspect in relation to how they will be used within the analysis of this study:

Image: Who are these artist-teachers? How have they come to know their lives? What do their stories tell us about being artists and a teachers? As an artist-researcher, I will collage the participants' portraits, determining what is essential to the understanding of the images that they hold and express.

Rules, principles and personal philosophy: Rules constitute as actions that are followed on a day-to-day basis while principles refer to an overall belief system. For example, Connelly, et al. (1997) suggest a rule may be that the beginning teacher listens closely to student concerns. A principle might be that a teacher believes students learn most when they pursue their own interests. What are the ways in which the participants in this research act? Have they developed a belief system that they continuously follow? What do the participants want from their students, from their teaching and from their art?

Metaphor: In storytelling, people often use a word or phrase to literally denote one kind of object or idea and apply it to another to suggest a similarity or analogy between them. Through this process, metaphors give imaginative linguistic expression to stories that allow hidden intellectual avenues to be explored. Aristotle saw the metaphor as the most important device of the poet to activate representations and delight the audience (Eden, 1986). Within this study, the participants often communicate volumes of meaning with few well-considered brush strokes (Beattie, 2001) while painting their identities as artist-teachers.

Cycles and Rhythms: As the year progresses, a cycle of activities develops and as a reaction, bodily rhythms attach to those cycles. The flow and rhythm of one's life are connected to the cycles of daily living. The position in the life cycle and the rhythms that have been established make an impact on how the participants shape their daily practices and how those that they interact with respond.

Narrative Unity: Narrative unity refers to the themes that run through the narrative of experience. The narrative unity provides a way to see how the rules, principles, images and metaphors relate one to the other as they are identified by the practical situations in which the participants find themselves. These themes help account for the way in which the stories from their personal lives and their teaching are constructed. Such themes need to

be told over a temporal time span to understand how the participants' identities have been shaped during their first year of teaching.

Creating the Complex Composition

Stories, in the Aristotelian tradition, are formed within a basic pattern that includes three phases. In *Poetics*, Aristotle (384-322B.C.) aptly interprets these phases:

A beginning is that which itself is not necessarily after anything else, and which has naturally something else after it; an end, on the contrary, is that which is naturally after something itself, either as its necessary or as its usual sequel, and with nothing else after it; and a middle is that which is by its very nature after one thing and has another after itself. A well constructed plot, therefore, must not begin or end at any random point; it must make use of the beginning and end as just subscribed. (p.15)

When such stories begin, they will often start by framing a dilemma, a problematic situation that affects the main character. The reader of an effective story will then be drawn into this dilemma that begins the story's plot. During the middle section of a story, development and change will occur to thicken the plot. By the end, there will be some type of resolution that indicates the main character has changed as a result of the detailed events (Barone & Eisner, 1997). In a traditional sense, self-concept resides in a narrative unity that links birth to life to death, uniting beginning to middle to end (Beattie, 2000). However, in a postmodern world one could question, *where exactly is the beginning or how exactly can this be the end?* A type of language game can easily come into play. One way to begin at the beginning is to relate it to context. An accessible way for me to group the large amount of content within this thesis is to divide it into three such categories that serve as a metaphor to their positioning within the context of this text. *The Beginning* starts my story by framing the study and introducing problematic situations. *The Middle* thickens the plot by developing particular events related to such dilemmas. *The End* resolves these issues and concerns in the hope that change will result.

To complicate the process of communicating a story, the plot also has an underlying structure of its own which includes a reconstructed past, perceived present and anticipated future (McAdams, 2006). Within the plot, themes appear through the occurrence of particular scenes. The scene refers to the "place where the action occurs, where characters are formed and live out their stories and where cultural and social context play constraining and enabling roles" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990:8). The themes that emerge from the past cause particular actions in the present and provide direction for the future.

This temporal orientation is essential for time, place, plot and scene to work together and create the experiential quality of the story (Abma, 1999; Polkinghorne, 1988).

As various themes are introduced, a storyteller simultaneously moves inward and outward, backward and forward (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 1994). *Inward* refers to internal conditions such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions where *outward* indicates existential conditions such as the environment. *Backward* and *forward* relate to temporality. Thus, when a sequence of events is examined temporally, backward or forward, they appear related and an ‘illusion’ of time becomes “a powerful interpretive force of the writer” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990:7).

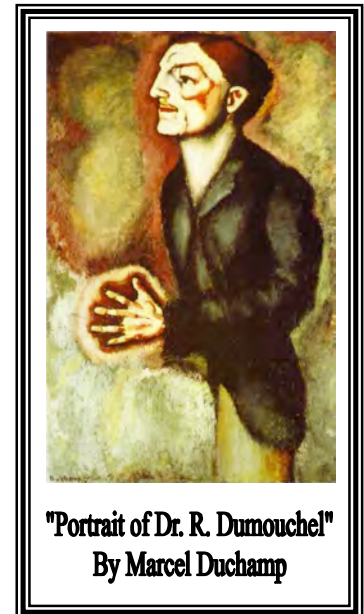
Clandinin and Connelly (2000) further explain that stories of experience are not adequately written according to a cause and effect model but rather they must be derived according to the explanations of changes that take place from the beginning to end. To maintain a sense of the whole and to prevent the reader from being lost in the minutia of detail, the writer must artistically determine what experiential details are imperative to the development of the story. To emphasise this, Sinclair (1951) clarifies that “the inclusion of the innumerable other events and conditions that do not effect the story’s future would be merely confusing if introduced” (p.34).

Still, another aspect that contributes to the complexity of this arts-informed inquiry needs to be addressed. When writing about experience, researchers often become ‘polyvocal’ (Gergen & Gergen, 2006) or ‘plurivocal’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). For example, in this thesis, the ‘I’ can speak as a researcher, teacher, artist, participant, narrative critic or as a theory builder. Yet in living this narrative inquiry process, I am one person. I am also one in the writing. What becomes important is for the reader to determine whose voice is the dominant one when ‘I’ is written (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

In addition, Cortazzi (1993) draws attention to the notion of multiple voices that are harmoniously in play. This is especially evident within my self-narrative as my voice speaks in terms of “the self then [1999-2000], the self now recalling then [2003-2008], the self now interpreting the self then from the present self’s perspective, the self now thinking of possible future selves, and a possible future self looking back to now to the present self seeing it as if in the past” (Cortazzi, 1993:13).

Within the beginning, middle and end of any story, the identities of the characters involved are revealed through the communication of their experiences. These experiences may include several voices, take various forms or be told in many settings before many audiences and with varying degrees of connection to actual events and persons (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994). Thus the themes, metaphors, definitions, defining structures and conclusions are often defined poetically and artistically and are context bound.

Similar modes of communication are also prevalent when viewing portraiture. In 1910, avant-garde artist Marcel Duchamp revealed the character of a friend he knew from school. The *Portrait of Dr. R. Dumouchel* was painted in context of an actual person and his career and symbolises an ennobling effect upon the totality of the inner and outer being. In this quasi-Fauvist portrait, which Duchamp described as having "violent coloring [and a] touch of deliberate distortion" (Mink, 2000:20), the identity of the doctor was emphasised with a metaphoric light encircling a healing hand. Duchamp artistically communicated his experience of knowing Dr. Dumouchel by producing an image in which his audiences could create their own conclusions and interpretations.



However, viewing a portrait can never be the same as knowing the subject in person. The way Dr. Dumouchel walks to work each morning, the smell of his coat at the end of the day, how it feels to be in his presence – these are sensations that go beyond artistic expression. Likewise, finding a language to portray one's beliefs and thoughts can be challenging, especially when such emotions are temporarily or permanently beyond powers of linguistic expression (Armstrong, 1973). There will always be more to a story than can be told and likewise, the writer knows more than can be articulated. For this reason, I acknowledge the realm of tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966) for the indefinable truths that exist between meaning and action.

Fortunately, arts-informed inquiry frees the researcher from being confined to only words. However, storytelling still depends on language to influence the meaning beneath what is said (Eisner, 2002). After all, it is through language that "social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where one's sense of self - one's subjectivity - is

constructed” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005:961). It becomes an artistic skill in itself to make educational research succinct, meaningful and interesting for the reader. The writing needs to reflect the researcher’s processes and preferences but in so doing, must also take into account who the audience might be. Richardson (in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) confesses, “...for years I have yawned my way through numerous supposedly exemplary qualitative studies” (p.959). As the writer of this study, I must keep one of the underlying purposes of arts-informed inquiry in mind by exploring forms of writing that appeal to vast audiences if I am to capture and hold their interest.

Artist-Researcher

Inspired by the writing of Finley and Knowles (1995), I too have become both ‘the researched’ and ‘the researcher.’ My past and artistic experiences guide me in developing this postmodern text that is non-traditional in content and representation.

My role as an artist plays an integral part in my life and cannot simply be ignored while creating this thesis. Art evokes both the passionate and disciplined sides of my personality. Even while other considerations compete for my attention, art maintains a dominant place. Whether I am teaching, writing this thesis or creating a collage, the process of my work allows rewards to emerge as tangible realities. As tangible realities, these rewards are valued and appreciated in the context of my life and in my sense of self (Wright, 2005).

Teacher and photographer Sally Wright (2005) came to recognise a relationship between her work and artistic practice that was not initially apparent. She originally saw each of her roles “as separate and exclusive from each other” (p.83) but by allowing connections to emerge, the importance of their relationship was revealed as she discovered they necessarily fed off one another. I can link and value my experience as an artist within the context of this thesis, just as I have with my roles as artist and teacher. Aligning myself with the philosophy of Wright (2005), I can view my practices as a researcher and as an artist in one realm. In doing so, an opportunity for personal growth and a stronger sense of purpose and awareness is presented. The broad purpose of my art is to communicate a feeling, an idea and a concept. Therefore communication becomes a fundamental role and aim for me as the artist. Successful communication is what brings me the tangible rewards (Wright, 2005).

Conclusion

When an artist becomes a researcher, or when an artist becomes a teacher, there will undeniably be transitions in the perception of self as new behaviours and roles are experienced. However, experiences past, present and future determine the way a portrait is painted just as the beginning, middle and end to a story reveals the identities of its characters.

As we pass through *The Beginning* of my thesis, there is one chapter left to be read. This next chapter provides an overall explanation of the methods used within this study and discusses their application to the research findings presented in the novelette. The novelette is the heart of this project and is therefore featured as *The Middle*. The analysis of the data and conclusive statements will naturally compose *The End* of the story to my research.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

Collaging the Study

Introduction

The individuality of this thesis began with me situating my identity within different contexts at particular moments in time. An articulation and theorising of my situated self reflects the provisional and circumstance-dependent aspects of this project (Vaughan, 2005). When I create a collage or construct my identity, personal meanings drawn from my culture and background are emphasised. The overall picture brings the disparate aspects of the internal-personal and external-contextual to a common place (Finley, 2001). What results is an artefact for broader resonance (Vaughan, 2005). Ultimately, the construction of this thesis metaphorically relates to the creation of a collage which in turn, signifies the development of the participants' identities as they become artist-teachers.

Identifying an Epistemology

This study is grounded in the lived experiences (Van Manen, 1997; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) of five early career teachers including myself. It focuses on the year following completion of a teacher education program where the qualifications to teach Visual Arts in secondary school were acquired. Storytelling became the impetus that guided the direction of my work and informed the overall design and analysis. The stories of our transitions and evolving relationships with art provided the investigative focus that endeavoured to formulate responses to the following research questions:

1. What transitional challenges do first year qualified Visual Arts teachers experience?
2. In what ways do artists' identities change when they enter teaching careers?

Creating a Workable Paradigm

To acknowledge and value our stories, it was a priority to develop a focused and flexible methodological framework that gathered a rich and varied cross-section of data. Such a framework needed to offer a collaborative partnership between the participants and myself to allow opportunity for exploration of the data. It was also necessary to work within a

paradigm that liberated me to immerse myself freely in the storytelling. While I listened intensively and extensively to the kinds of discourse at work in the lives of others, I also brought my own experiences to the discussion. In view of these criteria, descriptive case studies that utilised an interpretative approach were deemed most appropriate.

An Interpretative Approach

Interpretative research is qualitative in nature and focuses on making sense from social interaction (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This interpretive approach allowed changes to be identified as they occurred in the perspective of the individual teachers rather than that of the observer. The focus was on the context of the participants' new careers and how they interpreted their identities in relation to art as they made the transition from preservice teacher education to fulltime teaching.

Qualitative researchers have been conceptualised as bricoleurs - collage artists who draw from the aesthetic and material tools of their craft, deploying whatever strategies or methods are most appropriate (Denzin, 1994). As such, I have become the interpretive bricoleur who deployed a wide range of interconnected methods to continuously seek better ways of making more understandable the worlds of experience that were being studied. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) explain, there are no clear windows into the lives of individuals:

Our gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed. Subjects, or individuals, are seldom able to give full explanations of their actions or intentions; all they can offer are accounts, or stories, about what they did and why. No single method can grasp the subtle variations in ongoing human experience. (p.12)

The bricolage produced in attempting to understand these worlds of experience needed to grasp the meanings that constituted the actions of the participants within the study. To find meaning in an action, or to give meaning to particular actions, interpretation needed to take place. This process of interpreting or understanding is referred to as achieving *verstehen*. Verstehen entails a kind of empathetic identification with the participants - an understanding of their motives, beliefs, desires, thoughts and other tacit qualities (Schwandt, 2000).

Schwandt (2000) describes the art of interpretation as generally embracing two dimensions of *verstehen*. On a primary level, it refers to the complex process by which we interpret our actions and those of others in our everyday life. As a method peculiar to the social sciences, *verstehen* also becomes the process by which social scientists seek to understand the primary process. Hence, interpretivists aim to reconstruct the self-understandings of the participants engaged in particular actions. Through intense listening and careful observation, *verstehen* was the intellectual process whereby I, as the researcher, gained knowledge about the actions of the case study participants through the interpretation of their communications (Greene, 1997).

Representation of the Case Study Participants' Stories

Once an interpretative approach had been selected, the next step was to identify specific methods that would enable the research questions to be investigated appropriately. I began with my narrative. To achieve rich data and build on my own understandings, I then reported the narratives of others who had similar experiences. In using a novelette as a medium of data representation, I aimed to avoid “losing the temporal quality and contextual detail” of what was to be studied (Conle, 2000:50). The two methods (a self-narrative and novelette) utilised for presenting the data brought temporal meaning to the transitions of myself and the other participants. We were able to reflect in part on our biographic histories and our identities in relation to art, teaching and becoming teachers. Those events and perceptions were then linked to the present in an understandable and orderly sequence (Polkinghorne, 1988). My artistic decision to report our stories chronologically (as opposed to thematically) was to establish the importance of past events in order to anticipate the consequences of possible future action (Polkinghorne, 1988).

My own narrative and narratives of the four participant case studies provided the data for my research. Maloch, et al. (2003) add support for the use of case studies particularly to the field of education by stating:

Case study research changes the focus of teacher preparation program investigations from a ‘macro’ level encompassing broad issues of content, standards, and other program components to a ‘micro’ level for a close, in-depth look at issues... research that explores the ways preservice education plays out in the first years of teaching is critical given the challenges beginning teachers face. (p. 434-435)

The selection of only five case studies became an issue of practicality (Anderson, 2002; Swain, 1998). The time commitment required for case studies makes it “unsuitable for

work with a large number of participants” (Bell, 2002:210). Case studies also require “close collaboration with participants and a recognition that the constructed narrative and subsequent analysis illuminate the researcher as much as the participant” (Bell, 2002:210). For this reason, my research focused on our five narratives to enable in-depth analysis. Cole and Knowles (2001a) confirm that looking closely at the complicated identities of just a few individuals within a community often allows for insight into the collective.

Our stories were collaged together with visual imagery, strong portrayal and expressive personality. Through insightful description, I transported the reader to the scene of the research by conveying the pervasive qualities for the phenomenon and evoking the nature of the experience (Sanders, 2003). When considering the choice of point of view in writing the narratives that tell our stories, authors have two options: first-person or third-person (Polkinghorne, 1988). It was most suitable and personal for me to write my self-narrative in first-person. However, my role within the novelette was written in third-person. Third-person provided me, as the author, with the advantage of being aware of everything and thus able to reveal the unknown between characters while commenting on action to develop the plot (Polkinghorne, 1988). In writing the novelette, I combined the “presumed accuracy of third-person statements with the feeling of authenticity provided by first-person statements” (Polkinghorne, 1988:95). My creative force in constructing these stories and the sources of devices used in their telling made the point of view significant in developing distinctive relationships between the characters.

When our stories provide opportunity for vicarious experience, readers extend their memories of happenings, feeding into the process of awareness and understanding. Readers come to know some things told, as if they have experienced them. Acquired meanings result from this encounter and are modified and reinforced by repeated encounter. In a social process, these meanings “bend, spin consolidate and enrich understanding” (Stake, 1994:240). Consequently, case study researchers assist readers in the construction of knowledge.

Selecting the Theory of Social Constructivism

This study used grounded theory principles (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to build Vygotsky’s social constructivist theory. As the researcher, I worked inductively using the narratives of the research participants to form a thematic analysis of the qualitative data (Jensen, 1989).

The focus of this research was on the transition of individuals through social domains, which oriented them to interpret and make sense of their experiences. This process of knowledge construction evolved from a position that advocated collaborative inquiry through which the artist-teachers offered informative data in terms of their own understandings and involvement (McInerney & McInerney, 1998).

The Process of Data Collection

Before data collection commenced, participants were recruited and the Human Research Ethics Application was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Sydney (Appendix B). Following all ethical guidelines, interactive interviews were conducted to create a thorough understanding of the transitions experienced by the early career artist-teachers.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited from the Bachelor of Teaching/Master of Teaching preservice teacher education programs at the University of Sydney. I met and discussed my research with the co-ordinator of Secondary Visual Arts Education in the Faculty of Education and Social Work and arranged to visit her class in April 2004. This class consisted of approximately twenty Visual Arts preservice teachers who would be exiting their teacher education programs before December 2004.

During the visit I gave a presentation describing my research and its underlying purposes, and allowed for questions and concerns to be raised. After my presentation to the class of preservice Visual Arts teachers, I provided a form for interested students to complete. It asked if they were willing to partake in the study throughout the entire 2005 school year, commit to four one-hour interviews and to provide their contact information. While recruiting participants, I clearly stated what my study involved - what the participants' role would be in the research, how long the data collection would take and what my current expectations were. I recruited all interested preservice students to allow for attrition and purposively selected those willing to be interviewed throughout the year following their preservice completion. There was no expectation that these individuals would be representative of a larger early career Visual Arts teacher population.

I initially interviewed seven participants from the original group of nineteen volunteers as they appeared most interested and committed to the research through our e-mail and telephone communication. When the second interview was conducted, three of these participants had become employed as full-time teachers while the other four were casual teaching. At this time, I decided to limit my number to six participants, parting with one participant who was casual teaching. By the third interview, I had selected my final four participants - Bridget, Maggie and Marcel who were full-time teachers and Meret who was the only one continuing in casual teaching.

Ethical Procedures

In any form of research, there is a primary ethical obligation to protect the welfare of all research participants. Kayser-Jones and Koenig (1994) write, “Although the original movement to protect human subjects arose from the abuses in biomedical research, it soon became evident that other forms of research also posed hazards to subjects, often subtle but significant” (p.17). As a qualitative researcher, I maintained a virtuous relationship with others by avoiding deception and practicing ethical procedures that ensured the good opinion of all participants involved (Eisner, 1991).

The ethical dimensions of research-participant relationships are highlighted in personal experience methods. When I entered into a research relationship with participants and asked them to share their experiences, issues of responsibility were always foregrounded as I constructed their lived, told, relived and retold stories as well as my own (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Within the self-narrative, issues of care for research texts that I created about myself also needed to be considered. Serious attention to how the characters of these research narratives were represented became an important requirement in sustaining ethical relationships.

To abide by the University of Sydney’s guidelines in ethics approval, all participants were given a Participant Information Statement (Appendix C) and Consent Form (Appendix D) prior to the commencement of interviews. Although no intent was ever expressed in discontinuing, it was explained verbally and in writing that each participant had the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. Before the interviews were

conducted, the Consent Form was signed and kept on file by both the participant and the researcher.

Participants were given the right to privacy and confidentiality. They determined how communication about themselves was given to others and agreements were made to limit access to private information. Geographical areas were identified to provide a general perspective on the environment of the teachers (Anderson, 2002). With the exception of my name, pseudonyms were used for the names of all high schools, participants and any other person mentioned within the narratives. The pseudonyms used for the participants' names were selected by the participants themselves within the guidelines that they use the name of a famous artist that they in some way related to. 'Bridget' selected Op artist, Bridget Riley; 'Marcel' selected Dadaist, Marcel Duchamp; 'Meret' selected Surrealist, Meret Oppenheim; and 'Maggie' selected native Australian artist, Margaret Preston. Direct transcripts that justify their pseudonym selections are located in Appendix E. By linking famous artists to the names of my participants, I could use well-known artworks as visual starting points for the development of my collages to portray the participants' identities.

Inquiry Strategy

The most direct and informative method to gain information from the early career teachers was through interactive interviews. As Polkinghorne (1988) confirmed, "For a researcher, the basic source of evidence about the narratives is the interview" (p.163). Such interviews provided the participants with considerable control over the inquiry process (Corbin & Morse, 2003). Since respondents spoke freely, they could relate stories (Polkinghorne, 1988) and share their varied experiences, helping the researcher understand the transitions through their own perspectives (Crotty, 1998).

Interviews were conducted in four stages: at the completion of preservice preparation (November 2004/Spring), at the beginning of the school year (April 2005/Autumn), in the middle of the school year (August 2005/Winter) and at the end of the school year (December 2005/Summer). The first interview focused on a brief biographical background of the participants including an explanation regarding their identity in relation to art. As in all the interviews, the questions were open-ended and participants were encouraged to give extended responses. Participants were asked about their preservice education program,

why they had chosen a teaching path, how they felt about entering the profession and their expectations for the year ahead. The second and third interviews marked the transitions each novice teacher had experienced including problems and issues that may have arisen. Participants related their preservice education to their present situations. They described how they felt about their identity in relation to art and how their perception of art and art education related to the reality of their students' world. Participants were also given the space to voice their opinion on whether or not teaching should be considered a form of art. The fourth interview explored the importance and significance of the transitions throughout their first year of teaching. Participants were asked to explain how they perceived their stages of transition from student to teacher, and offer reasons and insights into how their identity in relation to art has changed since the beginning of the year (general interview questions are included in Appendix F).

Interviews were arranged at a location and time convenient to each participant (Anderson, 2002). They were audio recorded so that the primary source of data was preserved (Farrell, 2003) and later transcribed to represent the narrative speech as written text (Mishler, 1991). Transcription of the interviews enabled me, as the researcher, to analyse what the respondents said and 'did with words' in order to establish the meaningful horizons of their experiences (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). All participants had the opportunity to review the content of the data to ensure accuracy and confirm verisimilitude.

In addition to data collected through interviews, I used my field notes (Appendix G), personal log (Appendix H) and e-mails (Appendix I) that occurred throughout the data collection period. Field notes included my thoughts, subsequent questions, future actions and other jottings of key phrases or memory triggers that could have possibly expanded into more detailed notes such as the personal log (Russell, 1999). The personal log was an ongoing record that was more reflective and analytical (Russell, 1999). As Farrell (2003) described, the personal log was a place where I "faced the self as instrument through a personal dialogue about moments of victory and disheartenment, hunches, feelings, insights, assumptions, biases, and ongoing ideas about method" (p.99). Participants were offered the opportunity to communicate with me directly through e-mail as often as they wished.

Reconstructing Our Stories

The data reported within this study was drawn from my personal experience in the form of a self-narrative and from interviews with the participants in the form of a novelette. Like all life stories, both the novelette and self-narrative chapters are necessarily partial and incomplete (Barone, 1997). The incidents selected for inclusion were identified by me, the writer-researcher as representing the most significant aspects related to the research questions. Since no story “that seeks to portray life experience can be identical to the experiences itself” (Eisner, 1991:190), I edited, emphasised and even omitted some parts throughout my data presentations. The same occurs when I create a collage - I cut and choose, I shift and paste and ultimately all decisions are made intuitively (Brockelman, 2001). Through a bricolage of strategies, the reconstruction of the resulting data aimed to articulate i) transitional challenges presented to early career teachers; and ii) ways in which the artists’ identities changed. I identified the most pertinent events then traced the causal and motivational connections amongst them in order to provide my readers with an organised, coherent account of the stories told (Carr, 1986).

The arts-informed writing style within this research offered me the desired freedom to creatively collage a text that would recreate for its readers the real world that was studied. For example, although each interview was held on an individual basis, the novelette joined all the participants’ stories into one. Within the novelette, I created a hypothetical reflective art group for the first year teachers. As the writer, this allowed me to ricochet similar information as conveyed in the one-on-one interviews off each artist-teacher simultaneously. Much like the disparate materials gathered together to create a collage, our stories were presented as a collective whole rather than as separate entities. Such a strategy also provided me with an opportunity to artistically insert personal interpretations into the life situations of the participants.

The data presentation methods I utilised were inspired by Tom Barone’s approach in *Touching Eternity* (2001). The narratives upon which Barone and I have based our work generally exhibited characteristics of imaginative literature including expressive, evocative language and aesthetic form. The self-narrative and novelette within this thesis were composed in a vernacular language possessing storylike features that avoided narrowly technical speech to address the specific interests of educationalists as well as the broader audience in a manner that could become ‘friendly’ to both (Barone, 2001). To read this

work is to journey into the lives of early career artist-teachers; “to see the facets of their selves from a host of perspectives, none of which is granted a privileged status” (Barone, 2001:2). The purpose of my research is formative and heuristic and as Barone (2001) claims, “best furthered by an experimental, postmodern text than by a traditional work of social science that aims for certainty rather than ambiguity” (p.7). As such, my authorial intentions are to promote conversations between the writer, the characters within the text and the readers.

At the same time it must be remembered that these narratives are literary constructions. This literary approach means that the lasting influences perceived by the participants, although sometimes directly stated, are generally nestled unobtrusively within the storied texts. “As with all literature, readers must remain alert for subtle clues to meaning” (Barone, 2001:36). In the chapters following the novelette there will be explicit identification of the learning outcomes attributed.

Just as the process of writing the self-narrative and novelette entailed literary juxtapositions and overlappings, shifting centres and margins (Vaughan, 2005), so did the process of creating the corresponding collages. Particularly suited to a postmodern, arts-informed inquiry, collage is a versatile and flexible art form that lends itself to multiple understandings (Vaughan, 2005). The gathering of bits and pieces from popular culture and everyday life and placing them into a single composition creates a unique relationship that promises a new perspective, experience and discovery. The collaged artworks secure their own voice and provide direction to this project by giving visual representation to its linguistic components.

Richardson (2000) defines writing as “a way of ‘knowing’ – a method of discovery and analysis” (p.923). Through the writing process, new aspects of a topic and the writer’s relationship to it are discovered. Claiming it is foolish for researchers to spend years doing research that makes no difference to anything but their career, Richardson (2000) asks, how do we write texts that are vital, attended to and that make a difference? She encourages researchers to accept and nurture their own voices, urging them to avoid just ‘writing up’ the research. Researchers need to make writing a method of discovery, a place that opens up the creativity and sensibilities of the writer-researcher. While collaging this study, my understanding of myself and knowledge of Visual Arts and early career teaching

develops through an experimentation with point of view, tone, texture, sequencing, metaphor and even visual imagery. I present a particular and unique self within this text - a self that claims to have some authority over the subject matter that is being interpreted, a self that is the writer, the researcher, a participant, a teacher and an artist.

Subjectivity to Interpretation

The presentation of all data within this study was subject to my interpretation. The events that created the themes explored were derived from shared stories that helped organise and interpret lived ‘realities.’ Constructivists argue that ‘reality,’ and therefore knowledge, is socially constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In collage, I can displace an image from the other elements that combine to signify it, and reposition it to create a new reality. In other words, I am “free not only to test the limits of visual syntax but also to do so in producing an endless combination of the elements of signification, a kind of visual free association based upon the possibilities of semiotic articulation” (Brockelman, 2001:5). For example, pioneer collage artist, Pablo Picasso, explored this construction of visual imagery. In his work *Guitar*, the subject matter becomes a woman’s body, a face, a hat – all of which continues a kind of punning play between the meaning of signs and the elements that signify those meanings (Brockelman, 2001). There is no ‘real’ reality, no single truth but multiple truths that are individually constructed. Whether there is only one story under study or thousands, the analysis is subjective and as such stands as a piece of constructed truth and understanding. Grounded in the subjective nature of the participants’ personal experiences, my intention was not to discuss an objective reality but rather a subjective reality. Therefore, my analysis (Chapter 7 & Appendix A) of the data presented can only be one of several possible interpretations.



Analysing the Data

My analysis leans towards the narrative/artistic side of the research continuum rather than the paradigmatic/logico-scientific (Barone, 2001). In quantitative research, analysis is derived from formulas and rules that can be interpreted through charts and summaries. In contrast, qualitative work carries its understanding through the entire text. Qualitative

research is meant to be read, not scanned, for its meaning is in the reading (Richardson, 2000).

In addition to the data presented within the self-narrative, other data collection for this research included transcripts of more than sixteen hours of interviews. This data was primarily verbal and therefore needed to be interpreted and condensed. The process of interpretation required me to create an analytic procedure that compared and contrasted data in an attempt to identify patterns or themes that would correlate with my experiences and effectively interpret my research findings (Jensen, 1989).

Since it was impractical to present all the transcribed interview data, an accurate description from selected materials represented my interpretation. As the writer, I interspersed my own interpretative comments through descriptive passages and quotations (Schwandt, 2000). By exploring and practicing alternative forms of qualitative research and representation, this arts-informed inquiry became a creative process dependent on my insights and conceptual capabilities.

For me to effectively analyse my data, I needed to make sense of and understand what was to be learnt. As previously mentioned, I began with composing the self-narrative to comprehend the early career transitions that I myself, as a first year artist-teacher experienced. Since this data was presented in the beginning of this thesis, readers could discover my character and experiences and thereby come to understand me as the writer-researcher. My experiences could also then be drawn upon as supportive material towards the several issues and concerns discussed in following chapters. Analysis of my early career experiences resonate throughout this thesis and are not solely confined to the analysis chapter, as is the case with that of the other four participants.

The analytical process of this study required me “to step back and critically analyze situations, to recognize and avoid bias, to obtain valid and reliable data, and to think abstractly” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:18). I needed to maintain the ability to analytically distance myself while at the same time draw upon past experience and theoretical knowledge to interpret what was shown. As a result, categories emerged from the participants’ stories rather than being identified beforehand by me as the researcher (Buoy, 2002). Following its presentation, the data was placed into categories through analytic

induction (Farrell, 2003). Such a technique involved scanning the data for the themes presented in the phenomena and for the relationships amid them. Instances of the phenomenon under study were labelled; labels or concepts were compared and those sharing similar characteristics were entered under a category (Farrell, 2003). Categories were then filtered through Furlong and Maynard's (1995) stages of transitions and Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) descriptions of image, rules, principles and personal philosophy, metaphor, cycles, rhythms and narrative unity (Appendix A). The substantive content of the analysis chapter (Chapter 7) therefore provided thematic structure for the interpretation of the chronological events described throughout the self-narrative and novelette. The themes presented within the analysis are:

- Transitions to a Career in Teaching (Theme 1)
- The Challenging First Year (Theme 2)
- Unique Challenges for Visual Arts Teachers (Theme 3)
- Identity Transitions (Theme 4)

These themes are followed by an investigation on the question, "*Is teaching a form of art?*" and then the participants' advice to future first year teachers is offered.

Is This Research Trustworthy?

The accounts of the participants' influences were "filtered, distilled, and often made more interesting and more insightful than they may have been in their original form" (Barone, 2001:viii). Barone (2001:ix) encourages readers of his postmodern texts to be 'suspicious' of him as a writer - to acknowledge the gaps, exaggerations, distortions and inconsistencies in the data while being reminded that some of what he writes, in a certain sense, is fictional. "So," Barone asks, "on what kind of evidence are we renewing our faith?" (2001:ix) He explains that the design of his studies does not detract from the reading of them but rather the documentation of the participant's worth and influence is actually enhanced by situating the study outside the bounds of traditional social science.

The impact that interpretation has on the meaning, content and structure of human experience within this research places validity and reliability in the background and brings to the foreground the relationship between the study as a social construction and its meanings derived by the reader (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994). However, as Lincoln and Guba (2000) recognise, validity cannot be dismissed. When analysing case studies, the

findings should still be sufficiently authentic, isomorphic to some reality and related to the way others construct their social worlds so that they may be trusted when the implications are acted upon (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

It has been a constant struggle for qualitative researchers to appropriately identify how we do what we do. Rather than borrow terms from the quantitative paradigm, qualitative researchers offer alternative ways to think about descriptive validity and the unique qualities of case study work (Janesick, 2000). The idea of crystallisation (Richardson, 2000) as a lens through which to view qualitative research designs and their components deconstructs the traditional idea of validity. Richardson (2000) proposes that the central imagery for validity in postmodern texts should not be rigid, fixed or two-dimensional. Instead, the central imagery should be more like that of a crystal, providing a deepened, complex and partial understanding to that of the social world by recognising that there are many facets of any given approach. What we see when we view a crystal, depends on how we hold it. Similarly, how this text is viewed will depend upon the angle of the reader's gaze.

In the postmodernist view, no one method can deliver an ultimate truth (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Much qualitative research seeks to meet the literary criteria of verisimilitude to “represent closeness to the *whole* truth” (Maher, 1993:229). As the writer of this study, I have attempted to unravel the mystery behind my research questions to bring a hidden or submerged reality to light. So conceived, this study tells a truth by having established its own verisimilitude. But with this, Denzin (1994) explains:

...there are complicated relations among the truth, reality, and the text. Every genre of writing has its own laws of verisimilitude... in the end, clear description, as defined by genre, provides the basis for interpretation, understanding, and verisimilitude. That is, an event or process can neither be interpreted nor understood until it has been well described. Out of this process arises the text's claims for truth, or its verisimilitude. (p.505)

My descriptive text was addressed through the use of low-inference descriptors such as verbatim accounts of interviews and mechanical methods of recording. This process has generally been considered the most credible in gathering rich data (Jensen, 1989). Since the participants read the novelette for clarity and fair representation, I was able to overcome some of the ambiguities that may have presented themselves. Participants reacting to the drafts ensured the fidelity of their stories (Barone, 1997). The novelette was also read by others to allow for suggestions and any changes that would help clarify

meaning and strengthen the voices of the artist-teachers involved. These efforts contributed to the believability, plausibility and trustworthiness as verisimilitude of the participants' voices was ensured.

In my interpretation of the data, the reader must assume that I am truthful and sincere about the contents of my own inner world and that of the participants as I perceived them at the time of telling. Being trustworthy as a qualitative researcher meant, at the least, that the processes of my research were carried out fairly and that the products represented were portrayed as closely as possible to the experiences of the people who were being studied (Sanders, 2003). To maintain plausibility within this research, it was necessary that my interpretation corresponded with the way that the participants interpreted their reality. The methods that I employed allowed me to challenge my assumptions, check and recheck meanings with the participants, search for exceptions and seek confirmation. I engaged in a cyclic process to verify my interpretations of the data as acceptable and accurate. Questions were asked based on earlier evidence leading to further questions and evidence gathering. Feedback from the case study participants on the assertions of this study decreased the possibility of misinterpretation.

Building on what has been described and inscribed, my interpretation aimed to create the conditions for authentic, deep and emotional understanding that will enable readers to weave their own way into the experiences that have been interpreted. But as Denzin (1994) has written, "Unless you have had the experience, you cannot understand it" (p. 506). Those who have had similar experiences would be in the best position to determine whether or not the portrayal is authentic and accurate (Bullough, et al. 1991). Connelly, et al. (1997) suggest that to fully comprehend teachers' personal knowledge, one must work directly with them. The researchers state "ideally this is done collaboratively in such a way that teachers become research participants" (p.666). As a consequence, my self-narrative provides a strong authentic pathway that contributes to the *realness* of this study and assures the readers that the writer-researcher has 'been there.'

Strengths and Limitations

The driving force behind my research came from my personal experience as an early career artist-teacher. I have found this to be of great strength in supporting my study,

especially since qualitative methodology centrally places the identity of the researcher. Being both ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) provided me with considerable insight. However, there were still limitations which included my restricted perspective, my reliance on the beginning teacher responses and that the experiences of these participants could not be generalised to all early career artist-teachers. Due to the subjective nature of considering outcomes linked only to certain individuals, caution must be given to drawing casual associations, generalisations and conclusions (Gottschlich, 2000). Gottschlich (2000) clarifies, “Case studies describe but do not explain. Properly prepared, however, the case study is a valuable resource” (p.1293).

Storytelling has the qualities of credibility, plausibility and fidelity to a reality that is always seen through a veil, regardless of the method used. The commentary is filtered through perceptions and then distorted by memory. As the writer-researcher, I must be careful, critical and reflective – concerns that exist in equal measure for both quantitative and qualitative research (Barone, 2001).

Conclusion

As I create a collage, multiple possibilities can be visualised. I can conceive of what might be but is not yet. In the role of writer-researcher as bricoleur, I can also consider the possibilities at hand and those that could be acquired. Within the interplay of image and reality, in both roles, I go to work. The options available seem infinite. I decide what to use to create my work of art and how to use it. I select what colours and textures to use, when and where. I determine the placement of my subject matter and the reasons for my choices. The collage, like this research project, becomes a unified whole with creative invention intended to engage emotions and further understanding. The opportunity to discover what was previously unknown, or to see what was never noticed before becomes obtainable. Through the process of creation, new realities are constructed and made available for interpretation. It is the application of these methods that actively engages me in producing my thesis, which I consider to be a work of art.

Continuing with an ‘insider’ approach yet maintaining an ‘outsider’ perspective, the next chapter presents *The Middle* of this thesis and introduces the data collected through the interactive interviews in the form of a novelette. I am an ‘insider’ because I was once a first year Visual Arts teacher myself. However, my experience occurred in the United

States which naturally makes me an ‘outsider’ in regards to this study’s Australian context. Combining these insider/outsider roles, the novelette collages my experiences as artist-researcher-teacher with the experiences of the participant artist-teachers. Chapter 6 is a story about Denise (me), a researcher who follows the lives of four artists (the case study participants) during their first year of teaching.



The Middle

CHAPTER 6: NOVELETTE

Seasons Change

Denise Stanley slid the closet door closed to check herself in the full length mirror one last time before leaving to catch the ferry. Zipping her boots and straightening her belt, her mind sped ahead to the upcoming meeting. She was confident in her PhD proposal and eager to meet the class of prospective Australian teachers on the other side of Sydney Harbour. She may be living in a foreign country, experiencing autumn when it seemed like it should be spring, but her cyclic motions of interests were still at a familiar level.

As an experienced teacher, it felt quite normal for Denise to be addressing a class. When she arrived at the University of Sydney (uni), she assertively made her way to the sixth floor of the Education Building. Wishing for both men and women volunteers to participate in her study, she entered the art room to find only one male. He appeared more interested in something stuck between the pages of his notebook than in her arrival. Denise knew this was her only opportunity to generate interest to form a reflective art group, so she took a deep breath and hoped her ideas would capture his attention.

*

While sipping a latté earlier that afternoon, Marcel scribbled a moustache and goatee onto the image of the Mona Lisa which he had collected from the free postcard stand near the café door. He was determined to assault the tradition of the image as a way of subverting his sorrow over a particular hardship that continued to dominate his life. It had been a year since his break-up with Ray but Marcel's mind relentlessly replayed their intimate times together. The failed relationship seemed yet another example of the dramas life had dealt him.

From a very early age, Marcel had endured his fair share of psychological issues. At age eleven, he was forced by his parents into adoption. An eccentric Lebanese family agreed to take the artistically 'twisted son' and raise him as their own. But Marcel never could understand why such strange people would do such a thing. Distressed by his living arrangements, just four years later at age fifteen, he moved out to be on his own. He began an apprenticeship as a chef and continued with that trade for nearly seventeen years. While comfortable financially, being a chef was not his true passion. Since taking his younger

adoptive brother to school and helping him with reading, he had thought of becoming a teacher. Because he lacked a High School Certificate (HSC), he did not have the opportunity to pursue such a career until later in life.

Surprisingly, Marcel's hardships had resulted in an unexpected softness about him. His adoration for children could bring tears to his eyes. Despite the odds, Marcel had persisted in making the most of his life. Not only did the idea of becoming a Visual Arts teacher interest him because he would get to work with kids, but it was also a more realistic profession for him than becoming an artist, and certainly more fulfilling than continuing life as a chef.

Marcel had been active in the local art scene since his teens, but the idea of becoming a professional artist was simply out of the question. He believed one could only crack into the art market and find stability if the right people were known. But even if one did meet the 'right people' they would then take control - maybe not so much in *what* was produced but certainly *when* it was produced.

Teaching wasn't dependent on whom he knew, and if employed he would be paid regardless of his connections. Marcel desired a regular income and the time off during holidays to engage in his own artwork. He believed a teaching career would provide both. Most important to him, however, was getting that 'one in a thousand' student to appreciate art as much as he did. Too often he had seen young children look at art and conclude, "Oh that's so boring." Marcel wanted to change their perspectives and help students learn how to truly view a work of art. So, his current journal reflected those thoughts - the pages serving as a conduit to channel the hot air of the past into the lungs of his evolving future.

On his way out of the café, Marcel placed the newly embellished postcard between the pages of his journal. While flipping through the worn sheets, he caught a glimpse of hope in one of his recent drawings. He was reminded that as an artist he deserved free reign to decide when, where and what he felt like sharing with the public.

After arriving at class, Marcel became distracted by the contents he had recently inscribed into his journal. Eventually he pulled out the adorned postcard and handed it to Maggie who sat nearby. Only then did he begin to listen to tonight's speaker.

*

Maggie had no clue why Marcel had just handed her the desecrated image of the Mona Lisa but she smiled politely and pleasingly accepted it. Like Marcel and the majority of the students in the teacher preparation class, Maggie was also changing her career.

She was thankful that she had not entered teaching earlier in life. Doubting her maturity at the time, Maggie felt the closeness in age between herself and her students would have been a hindrance. In addition, she fancied her freedom and was quick to admit her frame of mind during her youth was not amenable to taking on such responsibility.

After completing a Bachelor of Design in Visual Communication directly following high school, a more mature Maggie began to emerge as she spent her days working in bookshops, child care and playing electric bass in a few alternative bands. Shortly after meeting fellow musician William, Maggie considered pursuing work that was related to her degree. Having gained experience in *Quark*, *Illustrator*, *PhotoShop* and other such programs during her undergraduate course, Maggie's artistic outlet finally found financial stability in commercial graphic design.

Combining her interests in music and image-making, Maggie worked for a rehearsal studio where she did graphic design for bands. Hardworking, creative and reliable, it wasn't long before she saw herself moving up the corporate ladder to enter a prestigious position in the art department of Mushroom Records. In the meantime, Maggie and William's relationship had blossomed. Within a year the happy couple fell unexpectedly pregnant and with matrimony, the seeds of a new emphasis had been sown.

Relying on William's income as a Science teacher, Maggie relinquished her post and became a full-time mum. In the meantime, Mushroom Records relocated outside Sydney, so when contemplating a return to work, it was agreed she would look locally for new employment. Unfortunately for Maggie, life as a graphic design artist no longer held the same attraction. She conflated that lifestyle with glamour, pressure and fierce competition. For the now domesticated mum, such an existence no longer appealed. Inspired by her husband's profession, Maggie made the pragmatic decision to become a teacher. All she would need were teacher qualifications to augment her existing degree.

Maggie radically shifted the parameters of her career by bringing it into line with motherhood. She felt that having a positive influence on growing minds would be fulfilling and pleasurable - a feeling that couldn't be found in the overly ambitious, egotistical world she equated with graphic design. The teacher preparation class she currently sat in continually reinforced and assured her of her decision to change careers. Energised by tonight's guest,

she wholeheartedly anticipated a new life that would build on her past experiences but in such a way that the larger community could benefit.

After class, Maggie discussed with Meret their common interest in the reflective art group that Denise had just proposed. "Sounds like a unique opportunity," Meret commented as they stood in the doorway blocking the room's only exit. Squeezing between them, Bridget rushed through. Class had gone late due to tonight's excitement and Bridget was behind schedule to catch the 9:05 train at Central.

"Would you like to meet up for coffee tomorrow?" Maggie asked Meret.

Unfortunately, Meret couldn't go. She was expected to be with her family to celebrate her father's birthday.

*

Noticing her tired reflection in the train window, Bridget ran her pale, freckled fingers through her tousled red hair. She was heading home for a late dinner after a long day of work and school. Only on Tuesdays and Thursdays did Bridget need to double up - counter clerk at the local bottleshop all afternoon followed by her university class at night. Single, 23 and still living with her large family, the only life she had known was school and part-time work.

A rational thinker, Bridget followed her passion and continued studying at Sydney College of the Arts after high school. Over time, she began to ponder how practical an art degree would actually be. She once sold a painting, which supported the purchase of her stereo, but it was becoming more and more obvious that, at that rate, artmaking in itself would not be a lucrative career. Taking that route would result in constant debt, unless she was consistent and patient enough to find some great gallery to represent her.

Disconcerted by the unnerving screech of brakes, Bridget suddenly realised she had already reached her stop. Throwing her bag over her shoulder, she exited the train with a smirk. The idea of being an artist and a teacher wasn't impossible, for Bridget felt that eventually a balance would emerge. The thought of a regular salary would be something quite new and rewarding as well. But it wasn't money that drove her motivation. She was driven by the desire to do something art related since she had spent so much of her life building towards that. Her imminent qualification as a Visual Arts teacher conveniently sent her down the right track.

*

Back home, Denise was greeted by her loving and supportive husband. "How did it go, babe?" he asked as he helped with her bags.

"Well, I feel pretty good about it all. More than enough people said they were interested in joining the group - even the one male in the class. So I'm sure I'll get four people to take part in the project."

*

Friday morning came and Meret had a quick job to finish down the road before heading over to her parents' house for her father's birthday. Her small landscaping business kept her busy to the point of debilitation. She would often set up a work site, leave for uni soiled with shrubbery to attend class and then return to the garden. Creatively designing suburban gardens was gratifying for Meret as she imagined even with a new career underway, it may be something she would continue to do. With just a quick turn of the mulch and the sprinkler system checked, Meret felt a sense of urgency to get on the road.

Only on rare occasions did she drive out to the old farmhouse. The road to Katoomba had a peculiar way of bringing to mind childhood memories of chickens running amuck, cows needing to be milked, mum hunched over in her veggie garden and dad... well her dad was an art teacher, just as she, herself, would become some day. On the farm there was a kiln and, as a child, Meret loved to play with her dad's clay. Most memorable were the little figures of baby Jesus that she spent hours detailing and placing in random nativity displays.

As Meret grew older, she may have renounced the farm life, as well as the all-girls Catholic schooling, but her zeal for art persisted. After undertaking postmodern and new media courses at the College of Fine Arts, Meret became interested in circus acts involving stilt-walking, street theatre and other forms of avant-garde performance art. She felt confirmed in her liberal and experimental lifestyle. But with that, there came a lasso. Meret's intelligent and sensible mind didn't allow her to see herself at fifty doing the same.

Hastily arriving to the farmhouse, Meret retained her composure as she parked her car and approached the porch. Her short, yet thick burgundy hair fell unstyled, framing her compassionate face. Meret was delighted to catch up with her family but reflecting on

gatherings past, she knew the social engagement would more than likely present its fair share of challenges.

"Happy birthday Dad!" Meret announced as she opened the front door to let herself in. In the entranceway rested the giant fur ball Meret made three years ago in her attempt to exhibit at uni. Her family may be a bit aloof, but they were always supportive of Meret's endeavours and proudly displayed the bizarre streaks of humour which pervaded her art.

Sitting in the family room some moments later, Meret asked if the telly could be turned off so the family could engage in some good, old-fashioned conversation. Oldest of the four siblings, Meret had a clever way of regulating familial situations. Reluctantly, her sister complied and the room fell silent.

"Thanks Eva," Meret said. "Okay... Now that I have your attention, I'd like to talk with you all about something that happened to me yesterday."

"Geez Meret, it's Dad's birthday - why don't you let him do the talking?" her youngest brother blurted out.

"No, that's quite alright," her dad shook his hand at Alphons. "Go on Meret, what is it that you have to say?"

"Why can't we just turn the telly back on? I'm not up for listening to any of you," her other brother interrupted.

"What's going on Meret?" mum inquired as she took her seat on the sofa.

"Well I know Dad and Eva, you are both teachers - and Erich, of course you used to be a teacher - but come the beginning of next year..."

"What about me? I'm a policeman, doesn't that count for anything?" Alphons argued as he now insisted upon being heard.

"Hey, you forgot my husband! He's a teacher too," Eva reminded her older sister.

Meret courageously attempted to continue. "What I am trying to say is that, come the beginning of next year I too will follow in this path. Since my days of volunteering with the Red Cross I have truly learnt something beautiful about myself..."

"Oh Meret, we all know you have wonderful ideals about how great the teaching profession is going to be - but be realistic, honey, the reality of it is - the job is awful."

"Dad! You're just saying that because you've had enough - and you're tired. Why don't you go do something else for a while? Step aside and let other teachers come through that really want to be there?"

"Be nice to your father, Meret. It's his birthday after all," the voice of mum was heard.

"Okay, originally I did see teaching as a bit daggy and not very glamorous but I want to express how my values have changed. In the past I was *so not* a teacher, or maybe I was just rebelling against being a teacher because of all of you. But Dad, you're an artist and you became an art teacher - didn't you once feel a passion for the job?"

"Oh dear, so hard to remember..."

Erich began helping his dad with words. "Students are just terrible - terrible... and the bureaucracies... all of that - you never..."

"Look," a frustrated Meret called out, "maybe *I am* being idealistic, but I like the idea of developing a rapport with children and the opportunity to finally share something real. It's a position quite pertinent to art in a way that's different to the circus or landscaping. I honestly feel the responsibility of this career will help me learn so much more about communication. Teaching brings something out in me that I like. It's making me feel alive!"

"Nice speech, sis - but get over yourself," Alphons said as he cut her off.

At those words, Meret became disheartened and left the room. She never got the opportunity that day to share her enthusiasm in becoming involved with an early career teachers' reflective art group.

*



Spring



"Who is Marcel?"

Spring

Four years of classroom teaching at Mountain Middle School had passed since the birth of Denise's career. But like seasons in continuous change, so must be her lifestyle. As her desire to travel the world persisted, Denise's latest endeavours would no longer occur amongst fellow Americans. The year was now 2004, spring was in full bloom and in Australia, the University of Sydney had once again produced its crop of new teachers. It was time for Denise to begin piecing together her study with the stories of four early career Australian teachers who ambitiously accepted her earlier request.

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On a pleasant November afternoon, Denise anxiously awaited the arrival of her guests to the studio which was located within walking distance from the uni. Studio Stanley was an inviting place; a place of action and warmth. Evidence of the spirited artist abounded in the brightly illuminated and spacious room. Supplies, paint and the occasional finished artworks were scattered around. But most apparent was a sense of anticipation for works to come.

All four participants arrived within minutes of each other. Although Denise was just getting to know them, a level of familiarity already existed between the recent graduates. Denise ensured their comfort, allowing time for re-acquaintances. The smell of freshly brewed coffee lingered in the room as the group settled in.

Being facilitator of the forthcoming discussions, Denise had her guests eventually take a seat at the worktable so she could begin. "I'm excited to get to know the four of you. Thank you so much for coming here today and being a part of my study. Please make yourselves at home," Denise smiled as she looked at everyone sitting around the table. "My intention with this group is to hear the stories of your experiences as early career teachers to inform my thesis and inspire a new series of artworks. But I also have the ulterior motive of creating a support network for you as well." Haunting flashbacks from her own early experiences as a first year teacher made her hope these efforts were not in vain.

Without hesitation, Maggie jumped in. "Before we begin, I just want to say that for the past nine years we've been together, William and I never really spoke about teaching. Sometimes I might ask, 'How was your day?' and I'd hear the context of who was the new coordinator or if there was a naughty kid but the nuts and bolts of teaching were never really discussed. Lately we've been able to debrief with one another about our teaching experiences

and I think that's been great - in a similar way to how I perceive this group will work for me. If I was approaching this career from a different situation, I do believe I would be much more scared."

Helping herself to a cup of coffee, Bridget replied, "I'm the type of person who doesn't like to get overly scared about things before they happen. But I would have to say that I am a bit nervous. I keep noticing more and more things we weren't taught at uni - like Occupational Health and Safety."

Without a doubt Denise wanted to discuss the graduates' reactions to their teacher education program at some point during today's gathering, she just didn't expect it to be so soon. But as an inquisitive researcher, she felt it admissible to keep to the flow of the discussion. "So, how do you feel about your teacher education program?" she decided to ask.

"I felt like I was just a number," Marcel bluntly replied. "I was very disappointed. When I finished, it was like 'alrighty then - see you later.' No help, no support whatsoever - and the Department of Education and Training (DET) was just as painful."

Marcel had opted not to do the Master of Teaching (MTeach) and left university after completion of his Bachelor of Teaching (BTeach) believing he would gain experience through casual teaching while receiving the benefit of pay during those third and fourth terms. But when he was told, "We can't give you a number yet. Art teachers are really not our priority," Marcel developed negative feelings towards the uncooperative DET. He felt they wasted his time when he needed to be earning money for his move to Melbourne. Luckily for Marcel, he was soon moving out of the state and would no longer need to be concerned with the New South Wales DET.

"And another thing," he interjected, "I also think eight weeks prac (practicum) in the school was not enough. There should have been less sitting on our arses - reading books, sleeping in lectures and writing all those essays on reflection."

"Well Marcel, maybe you feel that way because you left in July and didn't do the internship," Maggie noted. "You see, the structure of our course allowed you to graduate with a BTeach after 18 months. That included only eight weeks prac. Or you could earn the Masters during the final second semester by completing an additional ten week internship, an Action Research project and attending a Post-Internship Conference. So I received eighteen weeks total in the classroom before gaining my teaching qualification. It was *that* additional ten weeks that solidified my mind that I could teach."

Maggie was the only person of the four who had confirmed employment for the following year. With the current imbalance of Visual Art graduates compared to the availability of Visual Arts positions, Maggie discerningly opted for a double major and studied to teach Design and Technology (D&T) as well. And, as she could predict, that's where she found her first position.

"Marcel, you didn't like writing those self-reflections?" Meret asked.

"No, Meret, writing has never really been my thing. I would have much preferred to just talk in front of the class for ten minutes instead of sweating buckets over fear of being assessed on my bloody writing," he responded.

"Well, I actually enjoyed being taught concepts like self-reflective practice," Meret countered. "I agree there was a lot we weren't taught, such as writing programs or exploring the practical skills of teaching, but I can just go to the library and get a book on it if I want. I know how to resource myself. So, the course may have been very academic and a bit esoteric but we were really encouraged to have a caring attitude and approach teaching with our heart."

"Getting back to the idea of incorporating more prac into the teaching program," Maggie inserted, "it's not realistic to think we can apply our concepts when you meet students for the first time at the end of their school year. A caring relationship needs to build over time. How can I be expected to just step into some other teacher's shoes and all of a sudden get every student to be quiet when they don't know me?" Maggie directed her question towards Meret. "I have to agree with Marcel in that, if I were to design the teacher program, I would totally change the way the pracs were structured. I reckon it should almost be like an apprenticeship - where we would have one good placement in a school from the very first week, and then all our theory at uni would be based on that experience. I think that would have been a lot more valuable because the initial theory and educational psychology was interesting but it wasn't until I went on prac that I could apply it."

Denise was happy to say, "That's how my prac experience was designed. We were in the classroom from the very first day through to the very last day of the school year. For me, I felt it was the most beneficial part of my teacher education course."

"You're lucky because experience is what we learn from," Marcel expressed. "We don't learn just by writing stuff down. As much as they can lecture us we're not supposed to do this, we're not supposed to do that - don't shout at the kids... well, fair enough. But we can't really understand why until we've been in the situation."

"During my internship I actually had a go at screaming, but I didn't like it," Meret humbly confessed. "It's obvious that all next year we're going to be learning on our feet. There's only so much you can do at uni. Teaching is the kind of work that will get easier with time, and maybe uni could have provided us with more experience but..."

"To accommodate some aspects, others have to suffer," Maggie finished her sentence. "Honestly, I feel some of us may have become a bit cynical over particular motives, such as why certain staff members were teaching us - whether it was to further their own academic pursuits or whatever - but overall I feel pretty positive. Yes, there are certain gripes I would have towards the structure but any course would be like that."

Having drifted from the conversation, Bridget pulled herself out of a trance provoked by the optical illusion print which hung on the studio wall and added her perspective on the matter. "Overall, I was satisfied with our teacher education program. I agree practical issues could have been presented in more depth but what *I* am currently affected by is the lack of guidance I've received in writing letters for job applications. I've had a lot of trouble with this recently. Maybe since the three of you are mature-aged students you have experience to draw from but what's someone like me supposed to say?"

Unlike Marcel, who was looking for employment specifically in Melbourne, Bridget was up for anything. In fact, there was a part of her that desired working somewhere completely different from Sydney. But yet another rejection letter arrived yesterday and Bridget was becoming frustrated in her search for employment. Having sent out over 25 applications through Teachers on Net, the only offers that were coming back were for casual work. Casual work would suffice, and it would be a better income than what she currently earned at the bottleshop, but she was hoping for more and wasn't going to stop trying. Perhaps as a Maths teacher she could walk into a position in a week's time, but as a Visual Arts teacher, the DET informed her there was up to a fourteen year waiting list for some positions in Sydney.

"Bridget, I feel the same," Marcel confided as he leaned down to the floor to grab his journal out of his bag. "There are questions on these applications that I don't have a clue how to answer, yet we're expected to know. Rather than some of those ridiculous essays we had to do, we could have focused on that. The time was wasted, so wasted, in some of those classes."

Marcel had received his teacher number in the state of Victoria with much more ease than he experienced in New South Wales. But, like Bridget, he had also been receiving rejection letters from the several schools he had been applying to. While he was, to some

extent, concerned with how his application appeared, he also believed that there wasn't much sense in worrying about it. He was once told that it was common for teachers to wait until a week before Term 1 to resign because they wanted the holiday pay. Even in the United States, Denise wasn't offered her first teaching position until the new school year had already commenced.

Becoming slightly bothered by the pessimism, Meret spoke. "Okay, maybe the course wasn't perfect, but I happened to really like it. Or maybe it *was* designed for mature-age students, because it did build on a presumed level of knowledge. But we were taught important things - like the hidden curriculum. Every class teaches English. Every teacher is an English teacher. The role of the teacher is expanding so much - whereas 20 years ago, only an English teacher taught grammar and punctuation. Well, perhaps that's been happening all along, but now we're talking about it and it feels good to gain some awareness in this area."

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As she played with a piece of plasticine between her fingers, Denise found the conversation quite compelling. The worktable that the five artists sat around had a multitude of materials to explore while they shared stories of their experiences. Denise felt the discussions were allowing the group to vent some built up frustration, but they were also providing each other with an opportunity to gain new perspectives. While passing some plasticine to Meret, Denise asked her participants, "What kind of teachers do you want to be?"

"I want to help students recognise their full potential," Bridget quickly replied as she reached across the table for a piece of white paper. "And I want them to see me as a teacher who is going to let them do a variety of things to make the subject interesting." With a black felt-tip pen, she began to trace overlapping circles around the bottom of her coffee mug. Her personal work was undergoing a geometric phase. Bridget's investigations, were methodical and precise, yet intuition-based. She had an eye for bold lines and shapes and the technicality of achieving symmetry offered her a desired challenge.

"I think it's important for students to feel they can trust you to be an authority, but again, this will only develop with experience," Maggie added as she looked through the art supplies that were spread across the table.

Behaviour management is definitely tricky at times," Meret said as she began shaping the plasticine in her hands. "When students mock or ridicule each other I have discovered it needs to be stopped immediately. You actually need a lot of control over kids to get them to be creative," she said with a charming laugh. "When I didn't have control, what I thought was creative was actually just chaotic and nothing was getting done. But when I became clear about my expectations, they produced amazing results. I like creating a space that contains a level of safety where students feel comfortable being a bit eccentric and free from conforming to a specific mould."

"I also believe teachers should be good listeners and readers of character," Maggie said as she resisted the art supplies. "They should understand student motivations and why they behave the way they do."

With a sense of certainty, Meret reminded the group, "Students are designing their own lives - making decisions about who they are, what they want - and they're starting to be more productive and independent of their parents. I hope to channel that energy and give them structure and guidance. But sometimes I start losing my confidence and doubting myself and then I lose control of the class. That makes it difficult to keep teaching, stay focused and be so responsible."

"The responsibility has been the hardest thing to hit me. Oh my God, I'm actually responsible!" Marcel admitted as he lifted his head up from his journal. "During prac, even though you have responsibility, if anything were to happen, the mentor teacher or supervisor would just take over. Becoming a full time teacher is going to be very scary - carrying all that responsibility. I'm also going to have to get to know the staff much better than when I was on prac. And I'm going to need to develop better organisational skills."

"So, if these are some of the more difficult aspects of teaching, what do you believe to be the more rewarding?" Denise asked the group in an attempt to keep the dialogue flowing.

Meret looked over to Denise and said, "The reward will come when the challenging students are focused and doing their work!"

"That's right," Marcel agreed. "But what's rewarding for me is when I see firsthand what some kids have to go through and I become reminded that maybe my life isn't so bad after all. That feeling really makes me want to change their lives for the better," he passionately said as he lowered his eyes back down to his journal.

"I'm surprised to see that I actually relate quite well to kids," Bridget shared. "Maybe it's my age. At best, I'm ten years older than the youngest students I teach. I'm still a kid myself. I quite like watching *The OC* or listening to Limp Bizkit."

Maggie was thinking to herself that this comment was the exact reason why she *didn't* want to become a teacher straight out of uni. She found it interesting how opposite their views were on the situation.

Overlapping circles began to float over and under each other on Bridget's paper. Although the work was flat, her simplistic drawing held an unexpected depth as the pattern drifted in and out of focus. Bridget continued to trace circles around her mug while she carried on with a story.

"In the first couple of weeks during my internship, the students generally held the attitude 'Oh new teacher - we'll push her along.' But after that, I think they realised that I had more in common with them than what they thought. I encountered a couple of boys in Year 12 who were in the process of thinking they were wanting to come out of the closet and wanted to confide in me about it. I said, 'Well, you know, it's okay... actually my brother came out of the closet just a couple of years ago...' So that was reassuring for them to hear. They just wanted to have a chat with someone they felt comfortable with."

Still seeking ways to get over Ray, Marcel began daydreaming, "*Hmm... I wonder if her brother is single?*"

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Having done her research, Denise was aware that Australian teachers were under pressure by the government to boost overall student performance. Knowing the country was turning towards an emphasis on summative assessment by raising the standards across Australian schools, Denise felt it was imperative to ask the group their views on the New South Wales Board of Studies Visual Arts Syllabus.

"I think the syllabus is good because without it there's a lot of room for laziness," Bridget responded as she continued to create her circular design on multiple pieces of white paper. "At first, I couldn't seem to get my head around the conceptual framework. But as I read it more thoroughly, the outcomes appeared clearer. I just hope I'll get a chance to use it next year."

"I think it's quite clearly a compromise," Maggie declared. The syllabus was something she often contemplated. "I can see the fingerprints of all the different people who... the different stakeholders who ... well, let's just say it's not perfect. I think the whole idea of the frames and the conceptual framework is fantastic, but it's pitched too high for most students."

"I find in most schools, half the teachers haven't even read it," Meret said as she continued to work the plasticine.

Agreeing, Maggie carried on. "Well, the language is very intimidating. The concepts are sound but the vocabulary is at a tertiary level. For students to achieve in the written work of the Visual Arts syllabus plus the practical component - it's as complex as probably some of the humanities subjects they're doing in their entirety for the HSC. It's a very difficult course. And although I think there are certain well funded schools around the state and selective schools where the students and teachers might find it extremely stimulating and challenging, my experience in average schools where I've been so far has shown me that these kids are just never going to do well with the syllabus. That's a bit depressing for them, don't you think?"

Although Maggie was an advocate for public education, her ideal position would be teaching Visual Arts at a selective school. She found the run-of-the-mill system of co-educational high school a tough place to teach and in a professional sense, less rewarding. Of course there would be moments of enlightenment, but day to day Maggie believed she would be dealing with kids who were really not there for the love of learning.

Across the table Marcel sat doodling in his journal. Denise noted Marcel had withdrawn, but continued the conversation with Maggie anyway. "Do you feel the standards are set too high?"

"I'm not saying you shouldn't push them, but if it's unachievable, students are not going to enjoy the experience. Visual Arts is often one of the few subjects students enjoy and if they come out at the end with a low mark, it's really going to affect their self-esteem. But I can also understand Visual Arts needs a level of status in the educational community and that the subject has been fighting a long time to achieve it."

"I think the goals and the visions for the students are really beautiful," Meret's words curved richly upon the declaration. "Seriously! It helps me feel that what I'm teaching is important."

Marcel had been sketching in his journal while the rest of the group actively discussed the New South Wales syllabus. He was creating a design for a postcard which gave clues to a secret identity. This postcard would be sent to one of the other six members in another art group he was also currently active in. This network of artistic friends had been meeting about once a month for over three years to provide support and encouragement to one another. A group exhibition was planned for 2005 to display the postcards they presently made and posted to each other. Marcel was a prolific artist, having participated in half a dozen exhibitions last year alone. He was a painter at heart and with a childhood as messy as his, he could easily rationalise the dark colours and strange text he often incorporated into his compositions.

Having invested his integrity, Marcel maintained confidence that teaching would give him time to continue his own artworks, including the upcoming postcard show. He predicted that 2005 would be a very good year because, after all, he was moving to a new state in the first week of January.

Looking to engage Marcel, Denise redirected the conversation. "When I became a teacher, I remember feeling as if my own art education had taught me very little. How do you feel about your artistic skills? For example, how competent are you with basic drawing techniques?"

"Actually, drawing was never one of my stronger points," Bridget spoke before Marcel had a chance. "I practice drawing at home because I want to get my skills to a level where I'm happy to say, 'Well, here's an example.' I don't want to be giving students dodgy examples. But a lot of stuff I do is basically self-taught."

"I would have liked to have been taught how to draw," Meret confided. "When I was in school during the 70's the attitude was 'here's some materials, now go create... be creative.' I didn't get the technical basis either. So that's what I want to change. I want to teach kids how to draw and actually give them skills."

Just as some people may feel they can't sing, Maggie felt she couldn't draw. "I never received a solid grounding in drawing, and then my university course just compounded that. But I do think there is a lot of value in drawing - so that's definitely something that I have to work on."

"Subjects I didn't study in my undergraduate course, like drawing, ceramics and sculpture, I'll have to learn before I feel comfortable discussing them with a class," Bridget said. "I don't want to appear to not have the knowledge that I should. So it's a constant learning curve for me, which I like because it keeps me from becoming too stagnant. I expect teaching will help me to change and adapt."

Although Marcel appeared the most competent artist in the group, he agreed with what he was hearing and finally spoke up. "It's not realistic to go into a class and think, 'I'm a painter so that's all we're going to learn.' I, too, am constantly trying to find new ways of creating art." He held up his journal to share with the table, "Look here, I'm drawing postcard designs!"

The plasticine in Meret's hands had begun to take a feminine shape. She was thinking about the variety of media and resources even just there, in Studio Stanley. Teaching had a way of artistically inspiring Meret and she felt it pertinent to share her insights regarding the manner. "People keep saying to me that when I start teaching, I'll never have time to do art. But I'm finding that I actually make more art when I'm teaching because I'm talking about it and the students inspire me."

Meret's dream was to be employed as a full-time Visual Arts teacher in an alternative school. But to do so, she would need to study a Steiner course or something along the lines of Montessori to gain a specialisation in alternative education methods.

Reflecting on her own experience and all the exemplars she remembered making in her first years of teaching, Denise wanted to know, "Is it art for your sake that you're creating, or is it art that you will ultimately use in the classroom?"

Meret replied, "Well, we've been advised to practice what we teach - so, yeah, my art has been a part of that... Look here - maybe I could do a unit with plasticine!"

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The discussions continued into the early hours of that November evening. It had been a fruitful day of information as the participants in Denise's study shared early insights about their new careers. Although art materials were accessible, both Denise and Maggie refrained from making anything particular that afternoon. Marcel had been actively drawing in his journal, Bridget traced repetitive circular designs but left her work behind at the studio and Meret spent her time shaping a voluptuous feminine figure out of plasticine. While the focus

of the conversation centred on the context of teaching, the researcher had been mindfully observing her participants' creative interactions.

After her four guests left, Denise stayed behind at Studio Stanley to reflect on the day's research. Her intuition told her the project would not follow traditional methods. Something unique was informing her current compositions and accordingly, something unusual would serve as the medium.

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Autumn



"Who is Maggie?"

Autumn

Christmas came and went, and soon it was 2005. A tsunami had devastated eleven Asian nations, the world was in shock, but in another microcosm on the planet, a completely different scenario was taking place. Summer was coming to an end and a new school year had begun. Denise hadn't heard from the participants of her reflective art group since spring, until one day in February she received an e-mail:

Hi Denise, how ya goin'?

I have some big news - Just before Christmas I got a permanent posting for Visual Arts in Hay, about 8-9 hours southwest of Sydney! So far I'm really enjoying it, as I only have smaller classes (20 is the largest) and the staff are really nice too. I'm slowly getting myself organised, but I suppose that's what the first year of teaching is all about - disorganisation! Anyhow, I just thought I'd let you know about the move, and if you still need me for your research, you're more than welcome to come for a visit.

Cheers,

Bridget

Ecstatic to hear that at least one of her participants was now in a Visual Arts teaching position, Denise decided to give Bridget a ring.

"I had actually begun to resign myself to the fact that I might not be offered a job for this year," Bridget started to explain her situation. "So I was trying to get some casual work together. But about halfway through December I got a call from the DET, they offered me the job and told me I had 24 hours to think about it. So, I looked on the map and thought, 'No way. There is literally nothing for 120k's around Hay.' But I also didn't want to be waiting around, working in the bottleshop for the next 14 years. If there's a position for me, I may as well take it. And I'm glad that I did."

"Hay is such a funny name for a town," Denise responded.

"I know. People go, 'So where are you moving to?' And I say, 'Hay.' And they say, 'No, where are you moving to?' I have to tell them that's the *name* of the place!" Bridget laughed. "Hey, Denise..."

"Hey what? ...You live in Hay."

"Oh, ha ha ha," Bridget mockingly laughed. "I just wanted to let you know that I'll be up in Sydney for the last week of the school holidays and the Anzac Day weekend if you want to get together while I'm in town."

"That's a great idea," Denise concurred as she got the wheels turning for the group's second meeting. "I'll call the others and arrange a day."

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After the brief conversation with Bridget, Denise thought she should probably call Marcel next to see how he was doing.

"Ah, Denise, I'm glad you called. I have good news. You are talking to an officially employed Visual Arts teacher."

Two members of her group were now Visual Arts teachers, one was teaching Design and Technology, and the other... well, Meret would need to be contacted next.

"Really?! That's fantastic - how'd it happen?"

"You see..." Marcel began his story, "...back in December I got an interview - it cost me over \$200 to fly to Melbourne - which I was pretty strapped for but I had to do it. So, I flew down for an interview. I ended up receiving a rejection letter from that school a couple of weeks later. But anyway, to make a long story short, I had basically given up. I moved to Melbourne on January 10th and decided not to stress about getting a job. Then one day I randomly decided to run into a café to check my e-mail and there was a message from the Headmaster at this school where I am now: 'Can you give us a call? We'd like to interview you.' So I went in with my prepared portfolio and they asked me questions and I tried to answer them, but it was an absolute nightmare..."

"Why did you feel that way?" Denise asked.

"I kept thinking I was repeating myself," Marcel answered then continued without taking a breath. "So then they put me in another room to privately discuss my answers. After they called me back in, the Assistant Principal asked, 'Why didn't you just answer the questions with what you wrote in your portfolio?' And I simply said, 'To be honest, I was so nervous...' And she replied, 'That's a good answer.' Then the Principal, who was also on the selection panel said, 'It doesn't matter anyway, because we're offering you the job.'"

"Oh, what a relief!" exclaimed Denise.

Meret, in the meantime, was finding herself in a state of flux. She had been neglecting her landscaping business and was considering scaling it down to design only due to the costs involved with advertising and insurance and the hopes she would be offered a full-time teaching position. Her life had been transitioning to an emphasis on her new career. However, a landscaping job was lingering, and a complete break from the business was not yet financially feasible.

When the phone rang, Meret saw on the screen that it was Denise. She knew immediately what she had to say.

"Well, no great news. I could wallpaper my room with rejection letters," Meret revealed. "I figure I haven't received any offers due to my lack of experience. But I have been casual teaching about three days a week at Sansibar College."

Meret was content to explore a variety of school systems and meet a diverse range of students. But at the same time, the impermanence had her feeling like she wasn't a complete teacher yet. Fortunately, she tried to see a positive in everything. Just sometimes she had to look a little deeper to locate it. Actually, it was this belief that helped her deal with the punitive attitudes possessed by some of the staff members she had been encountering at Sansibar College, an all-boys Catholic High School. In one instance Meret had a conversation with a teacher who was telling her how undisciplined the students were and how impossible it was to teach them.

"They're just kids," Meret took a seat on her couch to share the story with Denise. "The way he was talking about them was like they were mass murderers or something."

"Did you want to say something to him?" Denise asked.

"Well I did. I said, 'Ah, so they were a bit of a handful, were they?' And he answered, 'Well, that's to put it lightly.' In trying to humanise him a bit I said, 'Oh, it doesn't sound like you like kids much.' And he said, 'Well, I don't.' And I thought, 'Why are you teaching?'" Meret's voice intensified. "'Surely, you're not doing it for the money because you're crazy,' you know? You don't do a job like this for the money." Meret exhaled before continuing, "So I said, 'It must be hell for you then if you dislike the environment that much.' And he said, 'Yes, it is.' I was like, 'Hats off to you - Bye! I'm out of here.' I'm not going to learn much from that."

"I wonder if he's just totally burnt-out?" Denise questioned from the other end.

"Yeah, maybe."

"Do you think you might ever feel that way?"

"I know that I need to work in a school that's going to support me." Meret paused for a second. "Maybe I'm just shopping around for the ideal school," she spoke convincingly, assuring herself yet again it was okay to not have a permanent placement yet.

From an outsider's perspective it may have appeared that Meret was shopping around for the ideal school, but the reality of it was, she already knew what she wanted. What Meret desired most was a permanent position at Caroline Basle, a Steiner school in the northwest about an hour and a half's drive from Sydney. After a visit to the school, Meret confirmed her belief that the education the students received there was quite rich, despite the 'airy fairy' accusations some people had made.

"Oh yeah, I wanted to tell you that I visited the Steiner school last week. The art teacher - well, actually every teacher teaches art - but *the* art teacher is retiring soon, and she wants to train someone to replace her. I don't know what to do..."

Denise sarcastically advised, "Get on the phone and call her every day."

"Yeah, go out there and even volunteer once a week - get my foot in the door."

"If you don't give up, eventually it will happen," Denise predicted.

Before hanging up, Denise mentioned meeting up with the group again at Studio Stanley over the school holidays while Bridget and Marcel would both be back in town.

"I'm sure I can fit it in," Meret said.

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On the other side of Sydney, Maggie was settling into her job at Gum Blossom High School... or was she? Last year, after having done her internship there, Maggie was offered a position through what she considered to be a rather flattering indulgence of luck. The Principal had conveniently appointed her back for the following year which initially caused Maggie to have mixed feelings. She feared that once she settled into her D & T position, she would potentially be shutting the door to teaching Visual Arts in the future. Nonetheless, out of practicality, she accepted the offer.

However, Maggie later learned the Principal was not exactly in the position to be appointing new staff members. The school year had started and Maggie's classes had been progressing well until one day a targeted graduate was appointed to her position. In phoning

the DET, Maggie became irritated that she could never speak to the same person twice to learn what was going on. It was a shambles and for six weeks she didn't receive any pay. This made her feel even less committed to public education.

Maggie's experience of high school was at a selective school where the philosophy on education and attitudes of students seemed to be the complete opposite to that of the comprehensive public school where she was employed. Maggie often felt the calibre of the concepts taught at Gum Blossom were just not high enough. The work was too prescriptive and time to construct her own lessons was seldom available. She considered the students' overall knowledge to be poor and felt that some were only there because they had to be, resenting the work as an intrusion on their social time.

As it turned out, the DET's response to the Principal's request had made her a permanent mobile within the Department, not permanently appointed to the school. Her position was eventually organised and she was issued a one year contract. With that, Maggie felt an element of relief. She was not bonded in any way and could leave at the end of the school year if she so desired.

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A mild autumn with below average rainfall presented another beautiful, sunny Sunday afternoon in Sydney. It was the last weekend before Term 2 which marked the end of the first, highly anticipated two-week break of the year. Since the four members of the reflective art group happened to all be in town for the Anzac Day weekend, Denise arranged another meeting at Studio Stanley before they would return to work. This time she invited her guests to bring some art of their own to work on during their discussions.

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Meret arrived first, followed soon after by Bridget, then Maggie. As Denise was letting the ladies in, she noticed Marcel walking up the path. Once greetings were made and hands unloaded, Bridget and Maggie took their seats at the table to discuss the projects they had brought while Meret and Denise headed into the kitchen to make some coffee. Marcel went to the couch to unload his bulky bag. Through the window behind him two myna birds heckled a cat although everyone in the studio ignored them. The people inside were

much more interested in catching up with one another. It had been five months since they were last together.

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For the most part, Marcel had been enjoying his altered life in one of the world's most diverse and multicultural cities. Famous for its cafés and art scene, and known as the Garden City and sporting capital of Australia, Melbourne was the second largest metropolis in the country. Despite his new and grandiose environment, Marcel had been feeling a bit lonely and was wishing just one thing could be different. Yes, Ray was still on his mind and now that they lived in the same city, it didn't help that they kept bumping into each other. That's right - Ray lived in Melbourne. Drama did seem to gravitate towards Marcel, but one could only begin to wonder: was it self-inflicted?

Besides enduring the memories of a love now past, Marcel was also coming to terms with the demise of his once strongly knit art group and their presumed postcard exhibition. While seeking a gallery in Melbourne to hold the anticipated show, Marcel happened to link up with another artist for a different exhibition at an already predetermined site. So priorities shifted as new interests surfaced. Needing to develop a series of works, Marcel had intentions of pursuing intense artistic activity during the holiday. But as reality had it, he easily convinced himself that he deserved freedom to relax and decided to take the time off instead. Consequently, today happened to be the only day he pursued artistic activity during the two-week break.

"What a great idea to have us bring in our own artwork," Marcel said to Denise as he unzipped his bag and pulled out a modest-sized, darkly-painted canvas, some red string and a package of sewing needles. "Since moving to Melbourne, I haven't had time to do my own art. I was hoping that teaching would allow more time than it actually does, but even on weekends I am just physically exhausted," he said as he zipped shut his empty bag and tucked it under the couch.

"I thought I would get caught up on things during this break too - but I have done absolutely nothing," Maggie spoke across the room from the table. "I was so happy when this holiday came around. The term couldn't possibly be any longer."

From the kitchen, Meret contributed, "I'm delirious when I get home from work. If I casual teach three days in a row, I am so depleted by the end, I can't even stand."

"I so know what you mean - and the rest of us teach five days a week!" professed Marcel as he collected his supplies and made his way to the table. "I have truly come to realise just how demanding teaching is. I never thought I could be so tired. I have done double the amount of hours in past jobs, but with teaching..."

"You have to be *on* all the time," Maggie finished his sentence.

"That's right. I can never let my guard down," agreed Marcel.

"There's sure a lot to get used to at first," Bridget added. "Especially being there all day, every day and continuously having to keep your brain switched on," she re-emphasised Marcel and Maggie's points. "Getting used to that routine everyday is exhausting."

"Well I'm glad we're here now because lately I haven't had the energy to do anything social," Meret said as she gracefully made her way to the table with a full cup of coffee.

Getting the vibe that the early career teachers were rather stressed after their first term on the job, Denise wondered aloud, "Are you happy?"

"I'm not unhappy," Maggie responded to Denise's question. "I just wish things were more settled. My life feels so chaotic. At home, there's not a single place where I can just relax." She took a deep breath. "I'm also finding that I lose patience with my daughter a lot easier."

"Is your relationship with your daughter different now that you are a teacher?" Meret asked Maggie as she set her coffee down and took a seat.

"I'm more rational," Maggie began explaining to her colleagues at the table while Denise listened from the kitchen. "I'm not just dealing with situations when they arise. Instead, I'm looking for patterns in her behaviour. I consciously want to teach her all the time - because I see gaps in the knowledge of my students. For example, I am quite particular with her written English," Maggie carefully announced. "She'll probably resent that when she's older... Sometimes I worry what it's going to be like for my daughter - being the child of two teachers. Speaking of," Maggie suddenly shifted her train of thought, "William and I have been drinking more. Isn't that terrible - coming home and finishing a bottle of wine together? You can't teach with a hang over," Maggie smiled with a twinkle in her eye. "But William and I have been quite supportive of each other at home lately... But anyway, I was talking about my daughter," Maggie shifted her one-way conversation back. "It's going to be interesting watching her grow up with teachers as parents because to a lot of kids, teachers are the enemy. I also think being a teacher makes me more critical of her teachers as well. I

just have a different point of view on her schooling now - because I know much more about how it works."

Denise had almost forgotten how easy it was to keep the flow of conversation going with these four people. Maggie loved to talk, and the others weren't hesitant to share either. This was great for the facilitator, because she never needed to be concerned with initiating conversation - well, maybe occasionally she needed to motivate Marcel, but not that often.

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After cleaning up in the kitchen, Denise finally took her seat with the group. At this stage in her career, she had also experienced very little time for relaxation. "Do you ever feel as if you must bring your work home with you?" Denise decided to ask.

"At the beginning of the school year, I was spending all my free time trying to re-work a couple of programs that the previous teacher suggested I do," Bridget replied with an undertone of resentment. "She said they would be good lessons to start with. So I thought, 'Ok. This is going to save me burning myself out before I even start.' But then I was just re-writing entire programs to suit them to myself. I was working on it every night - up until midnight."

"For the most part, I try not to bring work home. I really try to keep school out of my personal life as much as I can - obviously I can't completely," remarked Marcel.

"Well, I stay behind at school, usually for about half an hour, to prepare for the next day," Maggie admitted.

Denise recalled the many hours she spent outside of work creating the projects that she would use to help teach her classes. She was curious if her participants experienced similar situations. Maggie responded, "In my prac classes, I tend to make the projects as I explain them to the students. We have plenty of finished samples from previous years - because that comes with a prescribed project. I wouldn't want to spend all my time making exemplars anyway. It would drive me mad because it would be a waste of my time, especially when I don't even believe in the project," Maggie said as she began threading a needle.

When the room fell silent, everyone looked to Meret for her response. "I don't really distinguish work from home," she said, full stop.

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At the table, Meret had been transposing an image of the Virgin Mary - the same image one could find on a holy card in any Catholic church. Around the religious figure, she had scribed some text that suggested a feminist interpretation of what the female icon might be daydreaming.

Intrigued by Catholic doctrine, the fancy dress of her flamenco costumes, the sound of her practicing violin and her past life of theatre and carnival, Meret had a myriad of life experiences that contributed to her creativity. She felt connected to a strong feminist conceptual approach where ideas created the artwork rather than the technique. Meret was firm in her female voice and held a strong belief that it needed to be heard more - culturally, not just in the home. Her artwork had a tendency to be personal and political while promoting a feminine perspective.

And in her professional life, Meret was finding that the more she gained confidence and competence in her feminine voice at the all-boys Catholic school, the more she was actually heard. When she tried to be the 'right' kind of teacher according to what she imagined to be an external expectation, it didn't work. She couldn't compete with the boys. She discovered that she just needed to talk for herself, and then they would listen.

In relating her current artwork to her present life experience, Meret explained, "I casual teach in the most patriarchal school that you could possibly imagine - actually it's probably even more patriarchal than that," Meret laughed. "But I am trying to have my voice within this really male bastion, because I think it really needs to be heard. These boys need to hear a female voice. And they hear me - they definitely hear me. But I am also very aware of this pressure to be someone else and to conform to that model."

"Is that difficult?" Denise inquired while she took notes and sketched ideas onto a piece of paper.

"It's a lot of learning - trying to operate as a person, with her integrity, and with her sensitivity in an environment that doesn't encourage it."

"What do you mean by that?" Maggie asked Meret.

"It's just..." Meret attempted to explain to the group, "Look, the system is set up where authority over the students is supported. I've been noticing particularly with these adolescent boys - they're becoming men in front of my eyes. They have all this testosterone. They have real power in their bodies and they're just learning to manage it themselves. I think it makes them really chaotic and I find it very tiring to keep myself centred, focused and strong around that level of energy."

"I remember feeling that adolescent energy buzzing in the halls. I actually felt it - like the heat went up," Denise recalled.

"I know!" Meret accentuated her consent. "But working so close with the students in the classroom helps me stay respectful of them. I don't want to fall into an authoritative role. That's what happened to my dad. Unlike him, I believe teaching is about taking responsibility for contributing to and having faith in the next generation. So there's an altruistic side to the job which keeps me in check."

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While Denise reflected on memories of Mountain Middle School, she began to recall all the additional responsibilities that were assigned to her - many of which required time in those 'buzzing' halls. Prior to her first year of teaching, she hadn't considered such added obligation, and as it appeared in the current conversation, perhaps Maggie hadn't either.

"I have sport on Wednesdays... I am not a sporty person, but for the first six weeks of the term I had to take Year 7 touch football, and now I am coaching netball. I'm not used to being a coach, yelling over the kids," Maggie said as she pulled her hair back from her face. "And last month, I was out of the classroom for three days marking the ELLA papers - which was a Year 7 and 8 English literacy exam. The school asked me and three other people to mark them. I did get the chance to finally meet a couple of other staff members - but really only in a superficial, professional way."

Located in a culturally diverse middle-class suburb of Sydney, Gum Blossom High School was home to over a thousand students. The compartmentalized school offered each Department their own staff room. Maggie belonged to the Home Economics staff room where she was assigned a particular seat at the lowest end of the table. Perhaps alone in her thoughts, Maggie desired friends in other departments, but opportunities for such occasions were rare. Even at faculty meetings, which were held on the fortnight, she couldn't find opportunity to mingle.

"And I have playground duty," Maggie carried on, "which I don't mind. I get to meet other teachers and I quite like being with the students outside of the classroom environment," she said as she began stitching a child's handwriting onto a piece of cloth. "I've also been put on another committee that links to the primary school across the street. We're going to build a garden and paint a mural. I actually want to do as much as I can to build my

CV and gain experience." Marcel poked his head up from his project to acknowledge what Maggie had said.

"You know..." he said, "...whenever I'm on playground duty it seems like a fight always breaks out. Then all these other kids start piling around to have a look and I have to get rid of them too. Drama likes to find me, you know?" Marcel reassured the group.

Marcel was one of five teachers in the Art Department at R Mutt High School, a co-ed secondary college with a student population of 730. According to him, the area in which the school was located had been deemed the third worst in Australia. Many of the students were refugees whose families were looking to escape the war in Iraq. It was common for people to respond, "Oh, you poor thing," whenever he mentioned he worked at R Mutt High School. But he related to the issues of the school's oppressed youth and found himself often defending the reputation of the institution.

"Speaking of extra responsibility," Marcel continued, "I was at the school for only six weeks when I was nominated to be the person in charge of Harmony Day.

"What's Harmony Day?" Denise asked.

"It revolves around multicultural recognition - bringing people together, respecting Australia. I had to do a lot of stuff for that. But the biggest amount of extra pressure," Marcel anxiously announced, "was the mistake that was made in my load. First year teachers are not supposed to have a full load of classes. The school made a compromise however, and promised they wouldn't give me any extras."

"Give you extras? What do you mean by that?" the confused American continued to seek clarification.

"That means the school would have Marcel cover an absent teacher's class during his free period instead of calling in a casual teacher like me," Meret explained.

"Oh, okay," Denise said as she familiarised herself with the Australian terminologies.

Persisting with his list of extra responsibilities, Marcel added, "I've also been given the job of doing the school yearbook. So that's stressing me out as well."

Meret began colouring her image of the Virgin Mary thinking about the perks of being a casual teacher. Working on a day-to-day basis, she was never obligated to be part of such committees.

A pause in the conversation finally allowed Bridget a turn to speak. She explained that she, too, wanted to build relationships with staff members and felt fortunate to be one of three first year teachers at Blaze High School this year. For the most part, she felt as if

she got along quite well with the staff, all except for the mentor teacher she had been assigned.

Every Monday Bridget was required by her mentor teacher to stay behind after school to participate in a first year teachers' work group. Unfortunately, Bridget felt this group wasn't useful, the time involved was stressful and she couldn't help but to feel talked down to by her mentor who seemed to address issues solely from her Science perspective.

Meetings were also common for the small, country co-ed high school with a population of approximately 280 students. Besides meeting with her mentor, there were informal staff meetings every Monday morning and Faculty meetings on the fortnight. The schedule was tight, and with playground duty and the responsibilities of coaching the girls' soccer team, Bridget was finding herself busier than ever.

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The Sunday afternoon was going smoothly from Denise's perspective. She was content to see all four participants of her group willingly engage in artistic activity while they sipped coffee and discussed their lives.

Continuing to stitch her daughter's handwritten name, Maggie impulsively started a new topic for discussion. "I move all around the school to teach my classes. We all swap rooms all the time."

"I'm so glad I don't have to do that," reacted Bridget who had been penciling frangipanis onto a primed canvas. "Well actually, I do..." she took back her words. "I teach my English classes in the library but other than that, I'm in my own room."

"You're teaching English too?" Denise just discovered.

"Yeah, I teach five periods of English. I don't really like it. If I had my way, I wouldn't be teaching it."

While Denise was distracted by Bridget's news, Maggie continued, "So yeah, it just means I have to be considerate to other teachers. Sharing my classroom is not that big of an issue, but it would be nice to decorate and give kids more ownership of the space - and also have that continuity of 'we are here now.' I haven't been away much this year, except to mark the ELLA papers, but the kids behaved very badly for the casual teacher - almost like they resented me leaving. When I came back, it was a shambles. But if I had my own room, I

wonder if that would be different. So then Meret, as the casual teacher, you could come in and understand more of what the class was meant to be doing."

"That would be nice," Meret agreed.

"What other classes are you teaching, Bridget?" Denise wanted to know.

"I have three Year 7 and three Year 8 art classes, which is every Year 7 and Year 8 student in the school. Those class sizes range between 19 to 22. They're the largest classes that I have."

"So Visual Arts is a required course?" Denise was again surprised.

"Yeah," Bridget answered.

"That would have been cool if Visual Arts was a required course where I came from," Denise said. "What about you, Marcel? What classes are you teaching?"

"Well, I teach Multimedia, Textiles, Design... and I have a Home Group as well. I'm also spread out over the whole school like you, Maggie - running from one room to the next. My art room is used for History and Maths - and I just hate that. I have to clean up after each lesson, pack everything away, and if the paintings are still wet sometimes they get ruined. And because I'm spread out over the whole school, I'm having to take boxes of art supplies and things with me everywhere I go. I find it quite frustrating, because I forget things - like a pot of paint or something - and I have to send a student to go get it."

Denise was struck by the similarities and differences in her own experiences to those of her participants. One very time consuming activity in her first year of teaching was clearing out the previous teacher's rubbish. She explained to the group her troubles in trying to come in and fill someone else's shoes. Not only was the teaching environment cluttered with useless and outdated trash, but she also recalled how students consistently expected her to be like the teacher before her. So she asked, "What has it been like for you to come in new to someone else's previously established environment?"

"Actually, I had to spend an entire weekend cleaning my storeroom," Bridget replied.

"I've never gone into the classroom outside school hours," Marcel reacted to Bridget's response.

"For me, the kitchens were appalling," claimed Maggie. "But it wasn't like I could just walk in and start complaining straightaway."

"Because there was just so much useless stuff in the storeroom, I ended up having to do a lot of ordering," Bridget kept to her train of thought.

"It's funny how I had never even thought about things like ordering supplies until I became a teacher," Denise commented.

"Yeah, I had no idea," Bridget affirmed. "I had never done it before."

"It's a whole bloody process!" Marcel stressed. "I have to get the Assistant Principal to sign..."

"Something else that threw me for a loop was drawing on a vertical surface," Denise recollected her surprises during those first weeks on the job. "That was actually quite hard to do at first."

"That is weird," Bridget empathised. "And all I have is a chalk board. I'm a bit more inclined to stick a piece of paper up there and draw on that. The students can see it better anyway."

"So, getting back to ordering supplies - what are your budgets like?" Denise asked.

Bridget said, "\$3,000 - not very much."

"Not very much!?! Are you serious?" Denise couldn't believe what she was hearing.

"Interesting... our Art Department gets about \$6,000 and I thought that was hardly anything at all," Marcel disclosed.

"My budget is \$0 because I have absolutely no control over ordering supplies," Maggie responded. "Supplies are already predetermined with the programs that I am required to teach."

"Since I had only a \$400 budget, I was forced to carefully consider what I ordered," Denise described her limitations. "But I also struggled with teaching the students to conserve and be careful with the few materials we had. Have any of you experienced issues with waste?" Denise inquired.

"Totally," Bridget replied. "They waste so much paint down the sink."

"I find that, as a casual teacher, students try to get away with more than what they probably would with their regular teacher," Meret said. "I have to be really careful to always have the cupboard locked."

"I actually don't concern myself too much with students wasting supplies," Marcel revealed. "There're too many other things to worry about that are more important."

"Well, I have a lot of waste going on - and I always try to call the students on it," Maggie informed the group. "But it has a lot to do with their personal values - which, of course, is influenced by their home."

"Because my budget was so small, waste presented huge issues - but another concern surfaced when other teachers in the school approached me for art supplies as well," Denise recalled. "If other classes wanted to make posters or paper maché volcanoes, it was like I was expected to supply the materials for that as well. Once in my first year of teaching, I was even asked to make a mummy costume for the school play. Eventually it became rather frustrating because, not only did I lack the funds to support it, it also took class time away from my own curriculum. Do you ever encounter situations like that in your schools?"

"Ah, yes" Marcel agreed, "I'm always getting letters from teachers trying to get such and such..."

"How does that make you feel?" Denise asked Marcel.

"I'm actually quite pleased to help. But then again, I suppose I have the funds to support it."

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At the table, Marcel had been attempting to thread a needle with some red string. It did not appear a simple task, but eventually he did succeed. Maggie was also engaged in a sewing project. Both participants were using this time to familiarise themselves with sewing because it was a part of the curriculum that they were expected to teach this year. Meanwhile, Bridget had been sketching a photograph she took of frangipanis onto a small, square canvas. She was just about ready to start painting her composition. Meret was still working on the Virgin Mary, while Denise continued taking notes.

Occasionally there were slight lulls in the conversation where everyone fell silent and intensely worked on their projects.

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"When you were all here last November, we were discussing the New South Wales syllabus. Are you finding that you refer to your syllabus when developing lesson ideas?" Denise asked the quiet room, offering the group a new theme for contemplation.

"The support document of the Board of Studies forms the basis of my assignments," Maggie admitted. "I look at its suggestions, consider my resources, which are fairly meagre, then I think about my own skills to consider what I could do that would match their

outcomes. Honestly, the format that is taught by my faculty offers very little room for creativity or flexibility."

"What is that like for you - especially being an artist?" Denise asked.

"Well, at first I was resistant to it, but I just don't see the point now. There's too much work to get through and not enough time. However, there has been the occasion where I do try and inject creativity into the lesson." Maggie shared an example, "Forever and ever there has been the assignment: Make a calico cushion with a felt decoration on it, like some kind of character - say, Bart Simpson."

"We also made cushions..." Marcel told Maggie, "but I don't know if it's part of our Victorian syllabus. The students actually asked me if they could do it, so I said, 'Sure.'"

Marcel had been sewing the red string along the left side of his black canvas. Against the black background painted red words read: How long should the memory last?

"Why did you write that?" Bridget asked Marcel as she pointed to his canvas.

"I don't know," Marcel reluctantly replied. "I don't know why I write half the things that I write."

"So the idea just came to you spontaneously?" Meret inquired.

"Why do I have to justify why I do my art the way that I do? Why do I put text on a piece of artwork? Why do I choose the words that I do? I should be able to choose anything and make it art. Art can be anything."

"So a person can push a stick in the mud and call it art?" Maggie asked.

"No, that's just being ridiculous. An artist would give it justification," Marcel testified as he pushed on the needle forcing the string to go through the canvas.

"So then you must have justification for selecting the words you do?" Denise confronted Marcel in an attempt to get the true story out of him. Just then, the red string broke. "That was *not* deliberate," Marcel spoke in an evident state of shock as his eyes began to tear up. "Maybe this means the memory is broken now. Maybe it hasn't lasted as long as it should. So, there you go - perhaps there *is* justification behind it."

It was apparent to the group that Marcel was having an emotional experience. "Okay, I admit - it does have something to do with my ex. I'm just not in the mood to vocalise it. I like to confuse the public. Maybe it's a Leo thing."

"What is it about Leos that like to confuse people?" Denise was curious to know because her husband happened to be a Leo as well.

"Well, it's not just about being confusing. It's about being centre of attention, yet still being shy."

"How does that link to confusing people?" Bridget couldn't quite figure out what Marcel was attempting to communicate.

"If I didn't confuse people with my artworks, than my artwork wouldn't make people look at me. So you asking questions about my art focuses on me, which gives me a lot more attention."

"So, if your artwork was easy to explain, nobody would ask you questions?" Denise probed into the world of the perplexing Marcel.

"No. People would ignore me."

"Then you want people to ask you questions about your artwork?" Bridget asked still seeking explanation.

"Well yes, of course."

"But when we ask you a question about your artwork, you said you didn't want to explain it," Meret continued to challenge Marcel.

"I just wanted you to pull it out of me," he eventually confided.

Marcel had a peculiar way of contradicting himself - almost as if to prevent himself from conforming to his own tastes. He despised the art of Picasso because it was too mainstream, yet he read Harry Potter religiously and was in the front of the line at the cinemas on premiere night. He felt the world needed more text, yet couldn't understand who would ever read all the books on the library shelves. Marcel described himself as a lonely bicycle wheel stuck on a stool going around and around, but especially not going anywhere - just alone - and stuck to a stool. Yet, he had recently made the ambitious move to Melbourne to start a new career. The unconventional artist lived a paradoxical life indeed.

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"Yeah, anyway, the cushion project is a very old lesson in the syllabus," Maggie attempted to turn the conversation back to where it began, "but I've been trying to make it more interesting by encouraging the students into a creative process. So I got them to do an internet search - and what it kept coming back to was that they just wanted to copy something. They didn't want to create their own design."

Maggie was sitting across from Marcel sewing the letters written by her six-year-old daughter - something she wouldn't naturally do on her own if it weren't for the phobia she was trying to conquer. Like Marcel, Maggie was also intimidated by sewing and sewing machines. The ideas for her art were based on what was happening to her at the moment.

In terms of making art, Maggie had hardly been prolific this year. Although she hadn't felt the energy lately to engage in much art, ideas were still constantly brewing. Presently, she was discouraged by her uncreative living space. Space didn't used to be as much of an issue because her artwork was created on the computer. But graphic design continued to slip further into Maggie's past. She had a new identity now and wasn't interested in going back.

"So your students were resistant to being original?" Denise asked.

"Honestly, I try to discourage copied work," Maggie said. "But it gets to the point where it's produce something or nothing. Very few students are willing to take the risk of developing an original idea."

"I find my students are just lazy and that's why they want to copy - but I don't let them," contributed Marcel.

"Why not?" Denise asked.

"I don't think it's right," he responded. "Copied work does not promote creativity. It's fine to be inspired by another work of art - but they can't just copy that exact picture. I had a student who wanted to sew the Industrie symbol on his cushion. But I didn't let him do it because I wanted him to create his own design."

"One of the girls in my class wanted to put the Playboy logo on her cushion - so that naturally brought up ethical issues as well," Maggie pointed out, taking the discussion to another level.

"Did you let her do it?" asked Marcel.

"Yeah, I did. I think it's very old fashioned to think that the Playboy logo has the same meaning to this 14 year-old girl as it does to Hugh Hefner. For her it's fashion, and in some sense that's empowering. It's a totally different context."

"But they're still just copying some design," remarked Marcel.

"You know, I tried, but the students just weren't up for the challenge of developing their own ideas," Maggie stopped stitching and set her needlework down on the table. "However, since everybody had pretty much chosen to do a logo design, the lesson ended up

being more about iconic logos and typography rather than sewing a calico cushion. So I felt learning was still taking place."

"Would you say that students can still learn through copied work?" Denise asked the group seeking their stance on the debate.

Intently listening to the conversation, Bridget lifted her paintbrush off her canvas before expressing her opinion. "Well, they do learn sometimes - but I have also seen students get upset when their work doesn't look like the original. As Marcel was saying, it's okay to be inspired by an already produced idea, but then manipulate it to make it your own - but as Maggie was saying, sometimes it does come down to letting them copy just so they do *something*."

"What do you think Meret?" Denise asked.

"Most of the time the teacher has an assignment already laid out, so I don't really have a choice in the matter," said the casual teacher. "But when I have my own classes, I would prefer to promote original work, although they do learn technique from copying. It probably should be a balance."

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After a pause, Denise suddenly recalled, "That's right! We were talking about the syllabus and how much it influences your curriculum... Where else might you get ideas for your lesson plans?"

Looking first to see if anyone else wanted to speak, Bridget then started to share a story with the group. "I implemented a lesson that was actually inspired by a student. One of my Year 12 HSC students had this big canvas in the art room that was drawn up in sections, like a stained glass window. My Year 7s had been admiring the aesthetic of it - so I thought if they were really interested in looking at that, then it might be an accessible way for them to paint portraits. The Year 12 student was flattered that I took her idea," Bridget smiled as she sat back in her chair leaving her paintbrush at the table. "But I also taught a lino printmaking unit with my classes because it was something that I quite enjoyed myself at uni and in high school."

Bridget was enthusiastic to teach something she was interested in personally, and the works of such artists as Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol were familiar to her and allowed her to feel secure when discussing them with her class. The students studied these artists as

inspiration for a practical lesson in printmaking. Drawing from her student teaching experience, Bridget felt confident that the students would respond positively to the Pop Art movement in modern art because it was bright, visually strong and related directly to their personal interests.

"My lesson ideas are rather dependent on what's available," Meret said as Bridget went back to her painting. "I try to discuss artworks that are recognisable and a bit famous. Once I showed a class Ricky Swallow who represented Australia in the Venice Biennale. I recently saw his work at a gallery and read about him in a magazine, so I feel he's a good artist for students to know about. He's traditional in the sense that he carves wood, but the subject matter is contemporary - like skateboarding, which is quite accessible for teenagers. So it fits the criteria of being culturally relevant to the students, and is someone well-known."

"Then you adapt lessons to make them culturally relevant?" Denise asked Meret.

"See, that's interesting ... because the Coaching College I teach at on Saturdays is all Chinese."

"*What? Meret teaches Chinese students at a school on Saturdays?*" Denise thought to herself. During the past two group gatherings this had happened - the participants would be in the flow of conversation and then something, such as teaching Chinese students at a Saturday school, would come up. Yet to stop the conversation to inquire would be distracting to the participants' thought pattern. It was an art in itself, Denise discovered, to conduct these gatherings and retrieve data for her study.

While Denise's mind momentarily drifted, Meret continued, "Things that I accept as givens are western history. So I catch myself talking about something that is relevant for us in western culture historically but is completely irrelevant to them. I have discovered that I know very little about Eastern history - like the Chinese experience of war is completely different from ours."

"Something similar is going on with me," Marcel said. "Many of my students have only been in Australia for two or three years and I'm beginning to realise their education in Iraq, or wherever they came from, was very minimal."

"Compared to our western standards," Meret clarified.

Every two weeks Marcel had been implementing a project that required students to explore various mediums in the style of a predetermined artist. Marcel selected such artists as Frida Kahlo, Francis Bacon and Van Gogh because these were artists that he, himself,

enjoyed studying at uni. He had initially encouraged students to select their own artist to research but realised that his classes had little to no prior knowledge to build on.

"How about you Bridget? Have there been any incidents where you've seen evidence of your students' culture in their work?" Meret asked curious to how it was in the country. "Any sheep?"

"No sheep yet," Bridget chuckled, "But there's this one student that likes to draw motorbike helmets. His family lives on some property about 50 kilometers out of Hay and he spends his weekends riding his dirtbike around. And there was this other girl who drew her dad's ute. They do draw stuff that they're familiar with."

"Are you finding that you try to design your lessons to relate to student interests then?" Denise asked.

"The practical lessons, definitely," Bridget said. "The theory has been a bit more difficult. I have a class of only three girls who are doing the Year 12 HSC exam. Following the syllabus, I teach from case studies - which I find very daunting. Anyway, I started by giving the girls a case study on females in art. We looked at stereotypes - the mother, the whore, the male fantasy... Then, as a follow on from that, we looked at Barbara Kruger."

"Who's that?" Meret wondered.

"She's an American photographer, but she uses text in her works as well."

"So why did you decide to discuss her?" Meret continued to question.

"Why? Mainly because she makes strong feminist statements. There are a lot of issues regarding gender imbalance and female cultural issues in her work."

Intrigued by the insight, Meret inquired, "Why would you choose Barbara Kruger's work over somebody like Tracey Moffatt who's Australian?"

Marcel quickly perked up, "Hey, I referred to Tracey Moffatt's work in my class!"

Bridget answered Meret, "Honestly, I feel more familiar with Kruger's work since I studied it at uni. But also, I felt her work made very bold and obvious statements. One of her works that I showed the class was an X-ray image of a female skeleton but she was still wearing jewelry and had high heels on. There's this saying across it that reads: 'Memory is your image of perfection.' So, we talked about what the statement means, how it's linked to the image, what were the artist's intentions - we went through it quite a bit like that."

"How did your students react?" Meret wanted to know.

"At first they were like, 'This is really ugly, I don't get it,'" Bridget recalled. "But once we stopped and talked about it and I got information out of them bit by bit, I think they found it kind of interesting."

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Meret was always keen to support the feminine perspective and the project that she currently worked on was no exception. Bridget on the other hand, had a tendency to focus her personal artwork more on subject matter. Today, she was painting yellow and white frangipanis against a black and white checkered background, creating a stark contrast between the two. Meanwhile, Marcel had put his dark canvas aside, calling it 'quits' once the string had broke. That was the exact moment when the artist decided his composition was finished.

Denise had been listing key words in columns on a sheet of paper. She was recording clues spoken by her participants that would determine the images for her series of works. Feeling a bit uneasy that Marcel had been relatively quiet and disengaged from artistic activity since the broken string incident, Denise decided to focus a bit more attention in his direction. Looking towards him, she asked, "How do you guide students in their creative process?"

"That can be a sensitive issue," Bridget replied without noticing Denise was asking Marcel. "I used to hate it when my art teacher would say to me to do this or do that. For my students I just make suggestions and if they take them on board, good - if not, that's their prerogative."

"I'm really conscious about intruding on my students' art," Meret's response quickly followed Bridget's. "I'm also very careful to only make suggestions rather than direct them. But I have developed a collection of ideas for ways to encourage students to advance their drawing skills. Like having them draw what they see instead of what they think or telling them to focus on the negative space... And I always praise what they do, because students can shut down so quickly and go, 'well, I can't draw any way.' I am very tentative in the way I give instructions, especially with drawing."

Denise asked, "Have you ever taken a painting or a drawing tool and demonstrated a technique on a student's canvas?"

"No way!" Meret replied. "I'll just use some scrap paper and draw something to show what I'm talking about."

"What about you, Marcel - Do you ever see where you can guide your students into taking their work a step further?" Denise finally decided to address Marcel specifically.

"I do, but I am also very cautious in not saying too much." Marcel answered as he got up from the table, taking his canvas and red string with him.

Concerned where he was headed, Denise's eyes followed Marcel as she shared some personal insight, "Something I encountered during my painting units was that all my students would have the exact same blue sky or the exact same green grass."

"Oh, I know," Marcel agreed as he walked towards his bag which he had tucked under the couch.

"So what might you do about that?" Denise asked as she turned around to watch what he was doing.

"I just get pictures from books and say, 'Look, is this sky blue? And they say 'No,'" Marcel spoke from the couch.

"So, do you show them how to mix the colours?" Denise asked Marcel. "Because I think young artists just want to take the colour straight from the bottle," she said.

"I know!" Marcel's voice perked up. "But I get them to use different tools - scrapers, sponges - so they have to mix the paint rather than just use a brush. But I find that most of the time they're just lazy. I feel like I am always trying to pull ideas out from them. I actually ended up giving each student a Visual Arts diary and asked them to have it with them at all times so that they could start developing their own ideas."

"I know *you* like to have your journal with you all the time," Denise said.

"That's right. I was actually just coming over here to get it," Marcel smiled. "But with my students I had to kind of lie and say it was an assessment task and that I would look at it every two to three weeks - which scares them into actually doing it."

"So, how do you plan to guide your students in finding their own meanings with these assignments?" Denise encouraged Marcel to keep talking.

"Well, I'm trying to relate my assignments to what they like doing in their personal lives," Marcel said as he returned to the table with his journal in hand. "I have a lot of boys in my Media subjects, so I try and get them to write about footy or soccer."

"Are these interests that you have as well?" Denise asked.

"Well... yeah," he affirmed.

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"What do you think of the media-centred Schapelle Corby case?" Denise asked, switching the focus of the conversation to current Australian events. "Do you ever talk about that kind of stuff with your classes?"

"I try to if it is relevant - particularly with my Year 11 Community and Family Studies class," Maggie responded. "We did talk about Schapelle Corby. I tried to let the students voice their opinion on whether or not she was really trying to smuggle marijuana into Bali or if she was just set up. But again, the syllabus is tight and with the way things are programmed, students need to make a reference quickly in order for it to be worth mentioning. If you have to spend too long putting something into context, the lesson is gone."

Realising the day's conversations could go on for quite some time, Denise decided it was necessary to make more coffee and excused herself from the table to do so. "What did you talk about when you brought her up?" she asked Maggie as she made her way to the kitchen.

"We talked about why we hear what we hear. How do we determine what's real? Get the bullshit detector and work out sources of information. Why is it such a big deal? Who is Schapelle Corby? What does she represent? Why is it important if she's innocent or guilty, or in jail overseas? The student's beliefs are rather conservative."

"Is that surprising?" Denise asked Maggie from the kitchen.

"Well, it is to me - because I think about my friends and myself at that age, and I feel like I was much more radical. These students who I see are so judgmental. It makes me feel there's just no discussion of current events in their home."

Continuing the conversation from the kitchen, Denise raised her voice, "So, then what would they discuss in their homes?"

Probably *Big Brother*, *Australian Idol* or *The Footy Show* that they watch on television," Maggie replied.

"Hey Marcel," said Bridget as she tapped him on the arm, "You were just saying that you talk about footy with your students."

"Are you able to relate to your students on these levels?" Denise continued the conversation as she poured water into the percolator.

Also raising her voice to be heard, Meret wanted to make her thoughts on *Big Brother* known. "I actually have a strong stand on *Big Brother*. I know they're exposed to all

that trash, but I think Big Brother is just a cruel experiment - putting people in a space where they're isolated from the world and then watching it for entertainment. I find it really disturbing. But I have to be careful of how I word that around kids because I feel responsible for sharing an adult perspective. Once I asked the boys, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' And they said stupid stuff like, 'I want to be a porn star.' So, I told them right then and there, 'I don't want to hear that. You can talk to each other about those *dreams* - but it's inappropriate to talk that way with an adult.'"

"Basically, I just don't have the same popular culture base as most of my students. And it would be distracting if I did," Maggie admitted. "Although... I do like making jokes with them and getting on with them... but it's important that I'm not in their friendship group. *Big Brother* and *Australian Idol* is not the kind of thing I'm into anyway. But the students are, definitely. They're into all that kind of stuff - everybody has an iPod - and that's what they do with their time."

"We don't get Channel 10 in Hay. My students don't actually know anything about *Big Brother*, which is a good thing, because I hate it!" Bridget expressed while overlooking the iPod reference. "I agree with you Meret, the whole idea annoys me."

"I think the students I know are much more engaged with their own lives - like whether Sanisbar won the footy or who's living next door - more so than who's on TV. Although they watch it, I don't think it influences their work at school much. Not the kids I've been teaching, anyway," Meret explained.

"Yeah, local gossip - soccer games, sport - that's actually much more of interest to my students as well," Bridget agreed.

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Denise returned to the worktable with fresh coffee for the group. She had been enjoying the autumn afternoon collecting data to build the 'characters' of her research. Aspects of the participants' artist-teacher identities were consistently being revealed without much effort on her part. The conversations were lively and the guests appeared happy to be involved. Marcel had been sketching a man's face in his journal, while Maggie continued to delicately sew colourful thread onto her linen. With her new career and domestic duties taking their toll, Maggie seldom found time to engage in art for the sake of pure creativity. Even today, her art needed to have purpose and become something she would

use as a gift - a gift to be given to her English grandmother who had never met her grandchild.

Bridget sat next to Maggie painting the petals of her frangipanis. Denise observed closely the artistic styles of her participants. Looking to Meret's coloured pencil drawing of Mary, she decided to ask if there was any relationship between her experience of teaching at a Catholic school and her current choice of subject matter.

"It's interesting..." Meret began to explain as she poured soy milk into a fresh cup of coffee, "Being in a Catholic school as an adult has finally made me realise just how disturbing it is to see a crucifix hanging in every room. I guess I have issues with Catholicism. School is a place of learning. To have this guy hanging on a cross, bleeding - I don't think we need to see such a violent symbol every minute of the day. It's weird to have someone in pain as a symbol. Can we get him off the cross? - Wrap him up and actually start living what he said?" She stirred her coffee before taking a sip. "It took me a while to articulate what was so disturbing for me about Catholicism. I don't want to tell my students all those violent stories in the way they were told to me. Kids are extremely sensitive to that. I know I was. So, I object to that, and I am quite careful where I go with it - because I need to respect that I teach in a Catholic school. I also think students should have the opportunity to voice how they feel and understand their alternatives. I gently try to communicate to students to consider alternatives to Catholicism. I tell them that it doesn't mean their faith has diminished. It doesn't mean they don't believe in God. But there are real fears in this."

"I haven't tackled the religious or political side in my own artwork or in the classroom," Bridget said as she stirred her coffee. "But I do believe there are ways to take a neutral stance on controversial subjects."

"Ah, controversy...we should discuss this..." Denise thought as Meret carried on.

"My next artwork is going to get Jesus off the cross and I'm going to put Band-Aids on him. So I am making artwork in response to my experience."

"How do you address controversial subjects in the classroom?" Denise followed through with her thoughts before she got side-tracked.

After taking a sip of her black coffee, Maggie said, "In the classroom, I do believe controversial subjects need to be addressed appropriately because there is a form of censorship. You have to be very careful at school these days in what you show kids,"

"What would be excluded? Nudity?" Denise inquired, attempting to provide an example.

Maggie answered, "Pretty much anything that provokes a passionate response - which is a damn shame, isn't it? All those things are forced underground around the student population and become topics that cannot be openly discussed. It's not beneficial to the students, and I think it's going to be a real conflict in their future. It's like the whole idea of having a glass of wine at home with your parents for dinner or becoming a teenage binge drinker. It's the same analogy, really."

Marcel looked up from his journal and spoke to the group, "I have to be really careful in deciding which artworks I share with my students. But I do believe if there is a naked woman lying on a bed in the 1600s, I wouldn't worry about it. However, I'm much more careful when it comes to modern art. I used to be more careful than I am now. As time has gone by, I have become less interested in protecting my curriculum. I have decided that I actually want my students to start seeing these things. Like Maggie was saying, they shouldn't be so shut off from the real world."

"I have actually shown works of art in the classroom that do have aspects of nudity to them. The students laugh a bit but I just say, 'Look, get over it - we all have it.' Then we go back to the work," Bridget said as Marcel continued shading in the cheeks of the profile he had been sketching.

"So, the DET doesn't mind you showing nudity?" Denise questioned.

Bridget replied, "No, I don't think so. Obviously they would if it was pornographic - but, if you were showing Michelangelo's *David* or something, it shouldn't be a problem. Since the syllabus wants students to have a good, honest understanding of contemporary art, pushing values is part of that."

"Well, I'm really conscious of controversy because of child protection laws and also because of cultural diversity in the classroom." Maggie commented. "I can never really be sure if everybody is on the same wavelength. Something that would seem quite appropriate to discuss may be something that others would feel they shouldn't have been exposed to. There is a government present. Lessons can not be completely spontaneous. When I first went into teaching, I didn't think it would be like that. The extent to which creative subjects are being censored - I actually think that it hampers our intellectual development."

"But sometimes I want to take the opportunity when it arises to make the students more aware," Maggie carried-on. "For example, we were talking about Playboy earlier... but there's also Von Dutch... Do you know the whole story about him? Von Dutch as we see it today - with Paris Hilton wearing a traveler's hat - the kids who wear that stuff have no idea

where it came from. Von Dutch was a narrow-minded racist, bigot, sexist who didn't like anybody, had all the trappings of being a neo-Nazi, couldn't tolerate black people - but he became famous for his 'Kustom Kar' craze with his airbrush truck art in the sixties. The whole existence of this brand was actually started by his daughter who sold his signature to some young designers after he died. Apparently his last words were, 'Hail Hitler' on his deathbed. If the kids knew about this, and I'm talking about Pacific Islanders, almost anybody who is wearing that stuff, they would be shocked. So, talking to the students and getting them to think about racism....or homosexuality - which is another big issue... it's obvious politics are not discussed in my students' homes. They have no sense of ethics. They're raised in consumer-oriented, culturally conservative families. So, in my eccentric way of teaching, I just try and humanise these things that don't come across in their home."

"Speaking of homosexuality," Denise addressed Marcel, "has your sexuality been an issue on campus?"

"I have been asked if I'm gay... I just say no."

"Are you comfortable with that - not telling the truth?" Denise asked.

"Well, that's how it has to be. I just want to avoid confrontation. Nobody there needs to know about my personal life anyway. It's better that way, I think."

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"It's interesting to learn all that about Von Dutch," Meret said. "I had no idea. I don't wear logos myself, but I certainly see my students wrapped up in all that popular culture. Like earlier, you mentioned iPods," Meret reminded Maggie of another pertinent point she had made. "I actually believe the phenomenon that's sweeping schools at the moment is the iPod - it's the latest thing that you gotta have."

"I hate iPods," Marcel said. "The kids are constantly getting them out."

"And they all have mobile phones. Those are the things that I think interest kids most," Maggie added.

"They bring that stuff to school?" Denise asked.

"Yeah!" all four teachers succinctly expressed.

"They're kids - they want to bring them - so they try and text their friends during class," Marcel explained.

"How does that affect your teaching?" Denise inquired.

"Well, they're not allowed during class time," Meret said.

"They're not allowed at school, full stop," Marcel added.

"But they can be used as a good tool to get them to behave themselves," Meret disputed.

"The last time I confiscated a phone, I put it in my office and it got stolen," Marcel confessed. "So now I can't even begin to think about confiscating it. Actually, I do still confiscate it, but I put it in my pocket and give it back at the end of the lesson. I don't want to have it in my possession."

"That stuff is worth hundreds of dollars - like it's \$500 worth of equipment that they've got. If you do confiscate it, it really hurts," Meret confirmed.

"Mobiles and iPods have been my most frequent discipline issue," Maggie complained, "and they're not even allowed to have them at school - but they all do. 'Put it away. Put it away! If I see it, I will have to take it,'" Maggie spoke in her teacher voice. "They take photos of each other with the phones and they're not allowed to do that - because things can be posted on the web, dadadadada... And if you try and take it, you have a fight on your hands..."

"Do any of you have an iPod?" Denise interrupted.

"No I don't," Maggie replied. "But see, in the past I probably would have. I sort of see myself as the type of person who would be interested in that - but I'm just not now - I haven't got time to listen to music anyway."

Interestingly, no one in the reflective group had an iPod of their own.

"I find it almost impossible to police," Maggie began describing the classroom management issues she had encountered with the modern technology. "I have taken away students' iPods on a couple of occasions, but I haven't been consistent with it really. Technically speaking, it is true they are not allowed at school - but nobody really seems to be doing much about it - probably because they're so expensive, nobody wants to be responsible for losing it. We're meant to give it to the Deputy Principal, but the kids make such a fuss - it would be an absolute stand up fight - a fight that I don't think is worth having. Don't you remember in the 80s when everyone had a Walkman? What's the difference, really? There will always be distractions. I mean, students will always find their own distraction."

"So true," Meret agreed.

"It's like..." Maggie continued to emphasise her argument, "See, I've been teaching a lot of computing subjects, and there's a policy in my Department that kids aren't allowed to play games on the computer at all. But I personally don't have a problem if they play some

games at times - because it is superb computer technology - cutting edge stuff - and the kids are into it. I think it teaches them the value of what you can do with computer programming. I don't see any difference between that and them playing chess. It's necessary to understand what language the students speak in order to make connections."

"So do you let them play?" Meret asked.

In a quiet whisper, Maggie confessed, "I do sometimes. I wouldn't do it just as a pacifier - I'm still idealistic enough to *try* and relate it to something - but the games are on the computers. They come with the package of software."

"Do you want to know my secret?" Denise also spoke softly to the group. "I used to let students play games when they were finished with their work just to keep them quiet and in their seat."

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Denise knew first-hand that classroom management was one of the most challenging aspects of first year teaching. Keeping students on task, balancing time, setting boundaries, developing procedures and being persistent with clear expectations required a skill that comes only from experience - and experience was exactly what a first year teacher lacked. The early career teachers in Denise's reflective art group were certainly experiencing the inevitable.

Meret's situation was different. As a casual teacher, she didn't have the grounding to build relationships with her students that would lead to a natural authority. Yet she recognised the importance of learning students' names as quickly as possible. Working consistently at Sansibar College, she also made herself familiar with the school's back-up management system: first warning, second warning, third warning, time out and then chair.

Meret was trying to find a sense of calm competence in asking students to do what she wanted them to do and respect her wishes. However, she found it difficult to maintain this composure throughout the day. Meret was also struggling with holding her class' attention, yet conversely, sometimes she had the class' attention and would run out of things to say. There was a talent to teaching that Meret felt she had yet to fully acquire.

Lately, students were controlling Meret's classes more than she was. It was quite upsetting and once she even sat at the teacher's desk and cried. She couldn't get the class to be quiet. But when they saw her crying, the students were actually surprised to see just how

much they had upset her. This behaviour confused Meret. Their body language would say one thing - they didn't care; they didn't want to be there - but in actuality the students would be quite in tune with what was going on.

In dealing with her own behaviour management issues, Maggie had been working on her teaching image, concluding she needed to be two different people. If she were always herself, then when the kids attacked her, they were attacking *her*. When she was the 'teacher self', they then attacked the 'teacher.' Teaching was all about personality to Maggie, and while she was working out her teaching identity, she was also realising what may be an efficient way of handling disruptive student behaviour for some, was not necessarily what worked for her. Although the advice of her administrative staff was genuine, Maggie couldn't agree that the best solution for resolving an issue with a misbehaving student was to just write up a report.

The best solutions were still a mystery to be solved. Community and Family Studies was a class that Maggie was teaching but for which she had no training. With 24 students, this Year 11 class was her largest and most difficult group. What made it difficult was not actually the subject matter but rather the lack of seriousness possessed by the students. When it came to motivating them, Maggie felt she was learning everything the hard way. She tried to be friendly, she tried to be tough, she let them sit with their friends and when she tried to engage them creatively, they didn't respond.

Meanwhile, Marcel was finding some of his students rather violent - to the point where they were slapping each other in the face. Marcel had also been advised by his administrative staff that the appropriate way of dealing with behaviour issues was to file a report. But, like Maggie, he found that system to be ineffective for it only resulted in the student being suspended. Marcel believed there was no point in sending a student home. He much preferred the student to recognise the unacceptable behaviour and apologise for it.

Bridget's recent experiences with behaviour management were showing her that there was more than one way to deal with a situation. She recognised her discipline procedures as something that desperately needed adjustment but understood she was learning every day. In one memorable situation, Bridget learned that when students screamed at each other, "SHUT UP! SHUT UP!!" the noise only made them more aggressive - and when she involved herself in the screaming, it only made matters worse. She needed an alternative solution to control the disruptive behaviour.

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Time management was the thread running through almost every aspect of teaching - keeping time-consuming behaviour problems to a minimum, establishing routines that eliminated wasted time and confusion, organising classroom environments that allowed students to transition smoothly from one activity to the next, deciding how long or how often to teach various lessons... the list could be endless. In her first semester of teaching, Denise let the students play video games on their computers because she had ineffectively managed her time. It was common for students to finish their projects at varying speeds, but once the fastest students were done, there was often nothing else planned for them to do. Reflecting on that challenge, Denise decided to ask the group if they had had similar issues.

Marcel replied, "When we made our cushion and bags, there were students that finished in an hour. Then I had this other student who took days to painstakingly sew beads onto her bag. She made a beautiful flower that was absolutely stunning. So she got an A+, there was no question about it. Those students who completed their cushion in an hour - I knew they didn't enjoy the lesson."

"So how do you balance your time between those who finish early and those who take much longer to complete an activity?" Denise re-addressed her question.

"Sometimes I just let them sit there and do work from other classes, or I offer them the option to make another project," replied Marcel.

Bridget concurred, "That's what I usually do too."

"I always worried I wouldn't have enough supplies to let the students do the project again, or I didn't know how to assess their extra work," Denise attempted to explain her dilemma.

"I'll assess the first one or tell them they can pick their favourite, or I can average the two marks together for a combined mark," Bridget offered what sounded to be a simple solution.

"That's a good approach. But do you ever have students complain that they don't want to do the project again?" Denise challenged Bridget's idea, because she couldn't believe it would be all that easy.

"Yeah, occasionally - but that's when I let them do other class work."

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After a brief lull, Meret attempted to shed some light on the discussion. "Well, when I don't have anything to do, I draw the students."

"When is she ever not doing anything?" Maggie thought to herself.

Upon entering the profession, Denise believed that as a Visual Arts teacher she would be able to sit with the students and do her own art alongside them. In actuality, this was never close to becoming a reality. Perhaps it was different for a casual teacher.

"It's nice to have time to do art today - otherwise it would probably be summer before I would ever get around to doing any," Maggie said. "When I first started teaching, I thought I would be making art right along with my students. I would have my art room with all my resources in it..."

"Funny - I was just going to ask about that - because I thought that too!" Denise said excitedly.

"It's not a reality at all, is it?" Maggie said as Marcel and Denise shook their heads from side to side in agreement.

"I can't have my head down doing anything else. I need to be aware of the entire class at all times." Maggie concluded.

"Well, I actually do artwork during my Year 12 class," Bridget supported Meret. "I've been working on an oil painting for the first time in years."

"But doesn't that class have only three students in it?" Denise asked Bridget.

"Well, yeah - that's true."

"They probably enjoy seeing you paint," Denise said.

"They do!" Bridget's face illuminated.

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"I noticed students paid a fair bit of attention to my personal art that I hung in my classroom," Denise told the group. "I felt that this sharing of my art created a level of respect for me and my work that might not have otherwise existed. I also tended to share stories of my life experiences. I enjoyed opening up to my classes because it allowed me to feel connected with my students on a more personal level. But I also had to be cautious not to let myself get too comfortable with the information I chose to reveal."

"I feel I have done the same - quite a bit actually," Maggie said. "The advice of another teacher would probably be *not* to do that."

"Well, when I was a student I loved to hear about my teachers' lives," Denise admitted. "The more I knew about my teacher, the more I would like that teacher."

"It does make you more human. And it is the way I would relate to somebody normally," Maggie said.

Marcel believed that speaking openly to his classes had helped students feel more comfortable to talk to him as a person. "Oftentimes students come to tell me something about their parents or their grandparents, and I would say, 'You know, let me tell you a story...'" and I would tell them about my childhood. Then they would look at me a bit different. I'm not trying to get their sympathy. I'm just trying to let them know that I can actually see what they are going through - as a child, as a Year 9 student," he said. "But hey, I know exactly what you mean about sharing your personal artwork. I also had a really positive response when I brought in my art to show the students. They kept asking me to bring in more!"

Bridget agreed that sharing personal artwork could have a profound effect. "After the students saw my work, I felt they took me more seriously - and they began asking for more help," she said.

"Talking about my art and personal experience has been really good for my confidence," Maggie confessed. "After I brought in my professional graphics portfolio to share with my classes, I felt students could trust that I knew what I was doing. Particularly for those taking art in their junior years as a requirement - they might not elect to do art subjects later. So, they needed to believe that it was real and what I was teaching did make sense."

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Three rounds of coffee and the afternoon had passed. With winter approaching, the days were feeling shorter and soon the sun would be down. Denise knew she needed to spend a couple more hours working at the studio to develop her artworks before returning home, so she decided to wrap up the day's session. To conclude the conversations she wanted to explore the group's thoughts on the transitions they had experienced so far this year. Reflecting on her review of the related literature, Denise decided to ask the teachers if they had encountered any type of 'reality shock' within their new career.

"The most shocking thing for me has been the language that comes out of students' mouths," Bridget quickly replied. "Our school has a fairly strict 'No Swearing' policy, but when you see them having dinner with their family and you hear what comes out of the parents' mouths, it's no wonder they are like that. So there's contradiction there. And pacing/time management - like what you were mentioning earlier, Denise. It's something I still have to work on - just settling students and getting them quiet straightaway."

"Especially when classes are only 50-minutes," Denise emphasised.

"Exactly. And there's set up and clean up, plus actually getting them to do something..." Bridget started listing the issues until Maggie spoke out.

"It has shocked me to see that the students don't care to think. Their literacy and grammar is so poor. It's depressing. When I'm teaching them, I feel like I am trying to catch them up on six years of school."

"But I do believe that I am personally growing and developing a tolerance and acceptance for people much more than I would normally," Bridget continued, attempting to note the positives. "The whole point of public education is that everyone is accommodated - all ranges and needs. Whatever comes my way, I need to deal with - and that will always be a challenge."

"That's so true," Marcel confirmed. "I continuously have to think of new ideas, and new ways to engage students. But I actually like that and I definitely feel that I am finally in the right career. A part of me is happy that I waited until I was older because if I had started in my early twenties, I could just imagine I would get totally tired of it, upset and maybe even not enjoy the job much. It's a very stressful job. It's very demanding and doesn't even compare to my prac."

"But are you feeling recognised for your contributions?" Denise asked. "I feel recognised when I get my pay packet!" expressed Meret as she threw her hands in the air.

"Interesting you brought that up," Denise pointed out. "How has the money been for you?"

"I can actually afford to buy things now. If I want a CD, I go buy a CD," Marcel said.

"Coming from \$200 a week to now my starting wages of \$48,600 a year - yeah! I'm getting a new car," Bridget joyfully announced. "That will be good for driving back and forth between Sydney and Hay," Denise commented. "Exactly," Bridget agreed.

"For me, the money has been very handy," Maggie admitted. "I think part of the reason why I am not occupying myself more with creative things is because I can actually

afford to go out and spend money. For over seven years, my family was living on one wage. Now I'm earning more than I ever have in a week-to-week job. So I go out to lunch... it's actually become a different kind of life."

After settling down, Meret explained, "I'm repaying loans and I have been speaking seriously about going overseas. I was talking to another teacher at Sansibar and he was saying that in Terms 2 and 3 I'm basically guaranteed work three or four days a week. That's enough for me but if it's not that, I will still need to keep my landscaping business. I want to get solvent - teaching verses studying - I have accumulated debt, I need to start making plans. I'm ready to make money from teaching. But in Term 4, when senior teachers no longer have their own classes due to their students leaving school after the HSC exam, those are the people called upon to cover classes, not casual teachers. This means there will be little to no casual work in Term 4. So, that's why I've been thinking about traveling overseas - that is, if I don't have a job offer by then."

"The first year of teaching is bound to be an unpredictable journey. Who knows where any of you may be by Term 4? ...So Bridget, did you think teaching would be easier than maybe it actually is?" Denise decided to address the participants individually while asking the final questions of the day.

"Maybe slightly easier," she responded. "I'm definitely looking forward to getting past this beginning stage and being more settled. I have moved past the 'prac teacher' title into thinking, 'well my focus is on my job now - I'm actually qualified to do something.' I have to admit I do feel a lot more confident as a person living on my own without my parents. I'm so happy that I'm doing what I set out to do. I'm actually a proper teacher! It's not somebody else's class that I'm babysitting. There's security in knowing that I'm going to be at the school for longer than ten weeks."

Denise asked Maggie, "How do you describe yourself as a first year teacher?"

"I have to say, to some students I must be a role model of sorts," she said. "I can just tell by the way that they treat me. It makes me feel like a part of the school community. I'm confident, fairly eager to please and generous. I'm much more of a natural teacher than I was as a graphic design artist," Maggie assured the group.

"What about you?" Denise turned to Marcel. "How has this first year been treating you so far?"

"My overall experience has been quite positive," Marcel answered. "I, too, feel confident in the classroom, but I'm very accommodating to students... maybe even too accommodating."

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As seasons changed, so did the lives of the early career teachers. In reaction to the transpiring dialogue, the pieces of information that would combine to create Denise's collages emerged. These fragments of meaning would be interpreted through visual imagery to create a unique picture that would value the varying and distinct understandings of each participant's journey. Only time could tell how the collages would develop because two months would pass before the group would meet again.

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Winter



"Who is Bridget?"

Winter

June 4, 2005

Dear Family,

I miss you all so much! I've been having a really difficult time lately adjusting to this isolated country life and just thought that writing might help me get through this depressing phase. It's been nearly two months now since I've seen you - longer than I have ever gone! My workload is stacking up on me with reports, assessments, exams - I've been behind in getting HSC stuff out to Year 12 and it's really starting to stress me. On top of all that, my ulcers are acting up and I've been sick for a couple of weeks. I'm just feeling really low. I sat at home and cried all day yesterday. I called in sick because I had an anxiety attack the night before. So, today I'm deciding to write you all a letter in hopes that it will make me feel a bit better. Maybe I'm just really homesick.

Two years ago I would have never considered moving to the country. I would have been, "No - too many flies." So, in a sense I've actually surprised myself. I can no longer rely on my past life. I'm stuck out here on my own and it's forcing me to make it work. Whereas, if I just moved ten minutes away, I'd be going home to have mum do my wash. With an hour and a half drive to get anywhere and so few distractions, I'm forced to learn how to amuse myself. Sport is probably the biggest way of meeting anybody, so it's good that I joined an adult soccer team. But you might also be happy to know, I've started to paint again! So maybe the good can balance the bad and writing this letter to you will help me see that.

But it's been quite an adjustment. For start, there's a total lack of multiculturalism. Even when deciding where to go for dinner - in Sydney there's a choice of Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Thai, Malaysian, Singaporean... Here, there are maybe two choices. The other thing that's really different is the number of people. There are only 3,000 compared to 4 million. And people's professions - a lot of my friends in Sydney have corporate jobs, so

they wear their suit, travel to the city and sometimes they tend to frown upon people who don't have a respectable white collar job. In Hay, most people own their own business, work on a farm or are tradesmen. In Sydney, teachers are considered middle to lower end on the professional scale, where as in a country town like Hay, teachers are quite near the top. So, that's cool for me. It's made me gain an appreciation for the country. Because I've grown up in the city, I have never really known how Australia's industry functions. Since moving out here, I have come to realise city life is not be all and win all.

While I'm comparing the differences, I should also mention that the level of learning is much lower out here. If I compare myself when I was at school to the seniors I teach now, there's a big difference in ability and conceptual development. Even just the standard that my high school expected of me to what is expected at Blaze - it's just worlds apart. But then again, I'm dealing with a completely different environment. For example, there are no galleries to take students to. It's just not accessible here like it is in the city.

And my relationship with my students is changing. At the start of the year I felt like I was friends with my Year 12 class - probably because we're so close in age. They seemed to respond to me personally, which was good. They liked me a lot better than their last teacher and that was a nice feeling. But now I'm finding that I'm just constantly annoyed with them. They don't make any effort. I think they have actually taken a bit of a dislike to me. Maybe they're just over school. Who knows...

In general, the students are okay - they're not really naughty or abusive, just a bit cheeky. That verbally abusive kid I was telling you about mum, on the phone the other night, he would actually be my worst student. I think I'm just having difficulties teaching him because he's a life skills student and I never learnt anything about teaching life skills students. But for the most part, I do like the school. There's just a lot to get used to out here. I'm still coping with having my first ever full time job. I realise that. So, I guess I'll just have to take it a day at a time.

*Well, it's been nice writing you! Take care and I hope to see you all soon.
Maybe you can come for a visit?*

*Much love,
Bridget*

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Bridget's life had unquestionably been changing. In such a small town, there was no avoiding students and their parents wherever she went. Being the typical Australian outback town, Main Street proudly displayed its string of pubs - six in total - which tempted Bridget every weekend. Inside the pubs were the restaurants where her students and their families ate. And as a result, Bridget found herself constantly in the public eye. Yes, it was one thing to see a professional person at work, and then another to see them drunk and throwing-up on Saturday nights. The young teacher quickly learned how to keep her behaviour within reason - even in a town where there wasn't much to do.

But Bridget wasn't the only one going through identity transitions due to her new career. Maggie also lived locally to her school, and the 'paparazzi' were always around to assess each and every questionable or unflattering move. Feeling as if she were under constant scrutiny, Maggie noticed she had developed a fixed smile. She put on her 'best face' and wore it wherever she went. In a way, she found it energising - act happy and you are happy. But it wasn't just her attitude that was changing. Her style had started to change as well. She invested in 'teacher shoes' and, for the first time in decades, she felt she could no longer colour her hair. Living up to an image of constancy in her students' eyes, Maggie felt like she was getting old. Her life was changing, but she was doing her best to try to deal with it positively.

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Now Meret, who happened to be the oldest member of the reflective art group, was experiencing a completely different storyline. Still single and having moved her home twice this year, Meret was finding herself submerged in work - continuing to build gardens and

teaching Saturday afternoons at the Coaching College, while balancing a casual teaching schedule.

Each day presented a new situation for Meret. She was unable to establish a routine and felt she had little to no control over the curriculum she taught. However, a particular event helped her realise she could have more influence as a casual teacher than what she initially thought.

Usually the regular teacher would leave work set out for Meret. Sometimes this work seemed completely irrelevant to what the class had been learning. If it was something like "Copy Chapter 12," Meret typically found it difficult to get the students engaged. One day, she gave her class the option to do other class work if they wanted. But basically nobody did anything and the students took the period off - which, understandably happens occasionally when there is a casual teacher. To Meret, it seemed like babysitting... until that afternoon, that is. On his way out that day, one of the boys threw a line at her and sarcastically said, "Oh, great lesson Miss." The casual teacher agreed; it *was* a waste of an hour. But she was also surprised that the boy seemed disappointed. Perhaps, even as a casual teacher, there might still be the opportunity to do something amazing Meret discovered.

The boy's comment allowed Meret to reflect on her own disappointment. It made her think, "What is it that I want to be teaching students? I can actually teach now. I don't have to just babysit." She was learning a lot and desired to do more. So she organised a few of her own lessons. She already had one on reading marketing images, particularly advertisements. To plan more would allow her to develop her ideas as an art teacher even if she was still casual teaching. The opportunity was there but it took the boy's comment to help her take action.

It was July now, winter, and Meret was still pursuing the application process in search of full-time employment. She had heard of a position about six hours out of Sydney, but decided she was just too happy and established to leave. She decided that she would no longer seek work more than two hours from Sydney. And to think she had been spending time applying to Singapore! Plans of an overseas experience were abandoned and she soon enrolled in a Steiner course. Ideally she would some day land a full-time position in Sydney, at a Steiner school.

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For Maggie, who had long ago concluded she would live and work only in Sydney, winter and the start of the second semester presented a fresh group of students. The classes she taught remained the same, but having had the first semester experience to build on, issues such as time management, became easier.

However, Maggie was still feeling controlled by an inflexible syllabus. She considered it crucial that the projects be updated. How that would ever happen was another question. Life was busy, time was short and teachers did not receive much incentive to re-write programs. Schools were political places and Maggie was just a small cog in the system. But the bolt had been fastened. She believed that new teachers would push for change because of what they had been taught at uni.

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It took forever for an exhausted Marcel to write his end-of-semester reports for over 120 students, having to bring them home to complete during his out-of-school hours. But, like Maggie, Marcel was also seeing a completely new group of students while maintaining the same schedule and a semester's worth of experience to build on.

When the reflective art group last met, Marcel was beginning to notice the negative implications of being overly accommodating to his students. Denise knew the old adage, "Don't smile before Christmas." In Australia, the phrase was, "Don't smile before Easter," and this was something that rang true for Marcel. He found his teaching identity progressively turn more strict after he recognised an error in trying to be a friend with his students at the start of the year. Because his students began taking advantage of his easy-going demeanour, he concluded that in the future he would need to take a firmer stand from the beginning.

Marcel also began finding himself in some rather hefty arguments after being continually asked to cover classes during his free periods. At the beginning of the year, he was told he would not be given extras due to the error in issuing him a full load. But those in authority conveniently forgot this agreement. It was something Marcel was forced to accept and could not argue his way out of.

In addition to the external pressures, Marcel was sitting on edge with his employment status. Knowing he was only on contract until the end of the year, he spent his nights on the internet seeking other opportunities. Marcel found the Victorian Department website to be much like Amazon.com. He chose a job and put the job in a job basket. Then he would go to

the check-out and apply for the jobs in his shopping cart. He believed the process was rather ridiculous. But most bothersome to Marcel was that he had no security for the following year.

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The early career teachers were experiencing changes daily while Denise was hard at work using the information she received from the group gatherings to inform her PhD. She flew to Melbourne to visit Marcel at his school. Then a couple of weekends later she flew to Hay. She spent an afternoon with Maggie at her school and visited Meret at two of the three locations she had lived in this year. These journeys and the materials accumulated along the way provided some visual ideas for the collages she was making. In continuing to build the subject matter for this visual component of her thesis, the next phase of data collection, Denise decided, would need to focus on the transitions that were occurring to the artistic identities of her participants.

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Living with her large family and being confined to small amounts of personal space, Bridget's artistic practice had previously been limited to the assignments required for university. However, since moving to Hay, her artistic identity had undergone major changes. She was finding more space now that she lived on her own and had become a Visual Arts teacher. She established a work area in her classroom and dedicated her home to practicing art. One could not walk around nor sit down in Bridget's environment without shuffling supplies. She had finally established the means to engage in art whenever she desired.

Without doubt, teaching had made an impact on Bridget's artistic lifestyle. Working with high school students was quite different to her university art experience. She began to realise that she had truly lost touch with doing art for herself. At uni, Bridget was often required to justify why she was doing what she did. A theory-based approach to artmaking had forced her into a state of over-analysis. Bridget noticed high school students made something because they wanted to, and simply found pleasure in its aesthetic appearance. Relating to her students' outlook, Bridget was relieved to get back to the basic pleasures of creating art for pure enjoyment.

Marcel's artistic processes had also been effected by his new career. When he was a student, he focused much more on art, believing he had to paint at least an hour a day to be considered a committed artist. Now, two or three weeks might pass in between paintings. Much like his colleague Maggie, Marcel still had ideas for artworks, he just didn't necessarily create them. Neither Maggie nor Marcel felt up to being creative by the time they got home from work. Time was short and energy was low. After a while, even Marcel's sketchbook went neglected. Perhaps a year or two ago he would have been devastated by this situation but now he easily accepted it. Surprisingly, teaching alone was demanding enough.

Meanwhile, Meret was finding creative outlets just in her day-to-day living. She was practicing her violin, attending a Flamenco class early Saturday mornings and through her Steiner course, she had been actively painting. She was painting without any form, without any lines, engaging in a cerebral experience - something quite opposite to what she had done in the past.

*

Winter had officially arrived. The fragrant deciduous frangipani trees had lost their leaves and the once crowded city beaches had become bare. The school year was past halfway, as was Denise's data collection. Although she had been meeting with the participants of her study individually, thus far the reflective art group had only come together twice. Two more group gatherings would need to be arranged by summer. No holidays were approaching to provide an excuse for Bridget and Marcel to return to Sydney, so for Denise to get the group together would require some effort. Eventually she opted to buy return tickets for Bridget and Marcel to fly to the city so everyone could meet.

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It was a stormy winter day. The grey skies and pouring rain had not stopped for nearly a week in Sydney. When the participants arrived they took off layers of clothing - scarves and jackets, leaving their wet umbrellas at the door. Chaos outside was soon calmed by the warmth inside Studio Stanley.

Once settled, the coffee-making tradition continued. For today, Denise splurged and made an apple tart. At the worktable, she sliced up the warm dessert while the participants

began unloading their bags. Meret had brought a sketchbook this time but Marcel had not brought anything. The practical Maggie was going to cut Australian images from a catalogue and glue them to the front of folded card stock to make personalised cards. And much to everyone's surprise, Bridget was going to spend her time designing jewelry. From circular designs to flowers and now jewelry, Bridget was apparently exploring a range of subject matter.

"So Bridget," said Denise as she looked at the plastic tool box setting on the table, "have you noticed your art processes changing this year?"

"Yeah I know, now I'm making jewelry," Bridget said as she pulled out a drawer of small tools. "I have been experimenting with a lot of new ideas - trying to think about what I might be able to teach in my classes," she explained as she pulled out another drawer of shiny beads. "I'm continuously learning... right along with the students." She looked up at Denise. "For example, I tried to discuss Reinhardt and Rothko with my classes because I was familiar with their work and abstract art - but the students didn't get it. They couldn't appreciate their style of art. I learned that I needed to teach something they could grab on to. So, I taught a unit on Frida Kahlo, who I didn't have a great deal of knowledge about. But it ended up totally worth my effort to learn about her. Kahlo's work made students realise how important life events can be to art creation. Plus, part of the syllabus was the conceptual framework - where you draw relationships between the artist, the artwork and the world. Kahlo's work easily put all that into context."

"I also referred to Frida Kahlo and tried to get across to students the notion of using life experiences in their artworks," Marcel said before taking a sip of his coffee. "Not just making something because it looks pretty. I want to encourage them to draw from their personal experiences. Usually Year 7, 8, 9s - I need to feed them with ideas - we're doing Picasso, or we're doing Impressionism, or we're doing Dada - but in Years 11 and 12, they need to be feeding me. A teacher should only help facilitate and push them. By the senior years, students should be able to develop their own ideas."

Without looking, Marcel attempted to set his coffee down but accidentally balanced it on the edge of Denise's folder. Consequently, the coffee spilt onto the table soaking blank paper that rested nearby. "Oh, what a disaster! How typical of my life!" Marcel hastily stood up to avoid the fast approaching spill but proceeded to knock over his chair in the process.

"Marcel..." Meret looked over to him to catch his eye while Denise ran into the kitchen to grab a cloth, "Do you always look at everything that happens to you as a typical consequence of your dramatised life?"

"Are you saying that because last time we were here my string broke?" Marcel's reference to the last gathering's incident revealed that it was still on his mind. Ironically, he had purposely refrained from bringing artwork in this time in an attempt to avoid such drama.

"That's right!" Bridget suddenly remembered.

"Look, I've spilt coffee plenty of times, it doesn't mean that I'm a walking disaster," Meret replied. "A lot of that 'drama' is just self-created in your mind, you know?"

After Denise cleaned up, Marcel picked up his chair and sat back down in silence.

Meret had been sitting at the table thinking about how teaching had encouraged her to be open and articulate. She held no hesitation in sharing her opinions with Marcel, or anyone else in the group, for that matter. Her art processes were also taking an analytical turn as she constantly contemplated ways to teach it. Meret had been discovering that there's much more to art than just making something. While viewing a photograph she would think, "Why is this accessible?" Whereas in the past, she would have just appreciated the photograph for what it was. Now she analysed it, just as she would encourage her students to do.

"Steiner has totally changed my perspective on art this year," Meret carried on as if nothing had ever happened. "See, this year, I'm less like, 'Oh, the experience!' I'm more like, 'How was that effect achieved?' At Steiner I have to research artists and look at technique much more than I did in the past. Now when I'm looking at art I tend to break down the processes - like how I would if I were teaching a lesson."

"Are you finding that makes you more critical of other people's art?" Denise asked.

Meret replied, "Yeah, I know what you mean. You become an art teacher even when you're not in the classroom."

"So your artistic identity has seen some changes this year?" Denise wanted Meret to expand on her response.

"Definitely," Meret answered. "I'm thinking more that art is about reverence and beauty, and experiencing that as a kind of meditation. So I have moved away from a political analysis and personal process into something else."

"What do you mean?" Maggie asked as she stacked her cards further away from Marcel.

"Well, for example, when I was 20 my girlfriend had a sex change - so she's transgender - she was a woman who became a man," Meret began to explain as some eyebrows rose. "My way of dealing with that was to make a lot of artwork about it. That was how I processed it. I was really artful at the time and my themes revolved around gender and our right to play God."

"So how is your artwork different now?" asked Denise.

"This year I have become more technical. I'm trying to gain competency and document what I am seeing rather than express the process. I draw flowers and try to capture their beauty. I draw children."

Meret began flipping through some pages at the front of her sketchbook. "Look here," she held up a pencil drawing to share with the group.

"Who's that?" Maggie asked.

"A Year 9 student - Max."

"Do your students see you draw them?"

"Yeah - but if they didn't want to be drawn, then I wouldn't draw them."

"When did you find the time?" Maggie continued with questions.

"Well that was when I was casual teaching - when they were supposed to be doing work and I was supposed to be supervising them," Meret laughed.

"How long would it take you to draw that?" Bridget asked amazed at how realistic the sketches appeared.

"10 minutes."

"They're quite good," commented Denise.

"Really?"

"Yeah - I couldn't do that," Denise admitted. "I can't draw people for the life of me. That's why I work in collage!"

"My drawings have surprised me because this boy here..." Meret flips the page to share another pencil portrait, "He was always a bit of a class clown. But when I drew him he actually looked quite calm. The clown thing was like a mask, I reckon - like that's his role. Only my drawing made me realise that. That's how I am developing. I'm a lot more into beauty - and documenting beauty - which is all affected by Steiner because that's where their emphasis is placed."

"See, this is what's good about this group." Maggie had been thinking of her own situation while listening to the others describe their transitions. "This time here gives me a

chance to reflect." Silence fell over the room. "At the moment..." she paused again before continuing, "...I need more time and space." Maggie was feeling a little disappointed that she didn't have such a fascinating story to share. "Maybe you might think somebody who is devoted to art would make that space. But I'm not going to make art at all costs - although it is something I enjoy and it is a part of how I express myself. But I can't sacrifice my base needs for creating art at this point. Teaching is my art now - and I see that reflected back at me - the spark that I send out - rather than it being all about me, 'this is what I made, look at me' - Instead, I can see it in my students."

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"What an interesting statement Maggie just made about teaching being her 'art' now," thought Denise. Although the four teachers may not all be teaching art, they were all artists. "How important was it to them to balance both roles?" she continued to question in her mind. Speaking up, she sought the opinions of her participants and asked, "Do you feel that Visual Arts teachers need to be practicing artists?"

"I definitely believe Visual Arts teachers should be practicing artists," Bridget quickly responded.

"It certainly helps," Meret agreed. "Visual Arts teachers should be artists. It's a way of looking at the world that we're teaching."

"Teachers who don't actually practice what they do - I find it odd," Marcel said getting back to his usual self. "I can't comprehend it. There're art teachers out there that haven't picked up a paintbrush outside class for years. If I weren't a practicing artist and actively exhibiting, I wouldn't be able to do what I'm doing. I practice to understand. It just wouldn't be right for me not to do art."

Denise asked, "What if there's no time to be a practicing artist?"

"I don't know - surely during the holidays they could do some artwork," Marcel said searching for a possible solution. "Maybe I say that because I don't have any family, kids or anything else to worry about."

Mother and wife, Maggie responded, "My artistic life revolves around performance. I am 'Ms' now, so everything that I do needs to be towards creating that persona."

"So, do you believe that the act of teaching is a form of art?" Denise questioned further.

"A lot of teachers who I work with are not artists," Marcel replied. "I say this because they're lazy," he continued. "They do what they have to do - and then they don't even do that very well. They come in at half past eight and leave at three o'clock. They lack creativity. They never do any extra curricular activities. They don't even like the kids that much. So they're really just there for the pay and that's it."

"Wait, let's go back," Denise interrupted. "How do you define an artist?"

"Okay..." Marcel paused before attempting an answer. "An artist is someone who practices their art on a regular basis,"

"So, what is art?" Denise inquired.

"Art can be anything... it depends on what you title it as, or what you label it as," Marcel responded.

"I can be practicing anything and if I am practicing it, then I am acting as an artist?" Denise attempted to delve deeper into Marcel's philosophy.

"Possibly, yes. Anything could be an act of art - it just depends upon the person."

"Then would that perspective allow you to view teaching as an art?" Denise was aiming for a clearer response.

"I suppose so... yeah."

"What would make the act of teaching an art then?" Denise rephrased her question.

Sitting back in his chair, he said, "Being consistent and having strong beliefs... and having a passion for it."

Continuing to probe even further, Denise asked, "What do you mean by consistent, though? Are painters always consistent?"

"Painters aren't always consistent - but as a teacher you need to be consistent."

"So, is it a form of art for teachers to maintain that consistency?" Denise wasn't letting it go.

"Values... discipline... you have to be constant and consistent - hold it there and don't let it get destroyed by bratty kids. That requires an artistic skill!" Marcel resolved.

"Bridget, do you agree with this? Is the act of teaching an art?" Denise asked attempting to finally cut the badgered Marcel some slack.

Bridget responded, "There's an art to it."

"What makes it an art?"

"Okay..." Bridget took a deep breath to prepare for her analytical moment. "When you're a painter you do a painting. That is your method of working through ideas. So teaching

works in the same way. You have a set of ideals and ideas that you want to address and you do that by giving knowledge to students. Teaching *is* an art. I'm not sure if I have ever looked at it like that, but it is. Teaching is like art because it's a process. It's something that you have to think through. It's something that is always changing. You are always learning. There's always room to grow - just like in art! That's why I wanted to be a teacher," said the artist whose style had recently undergone several transitions. "I'm teaching so many different kids a year all these different activities - I am always doing something different. Teaching is the art of being versatile!"

"Are all teachers performing an act of art while teaching in the classroom?" Denise asked Bridget in reaction to Marcel's response.

"Maybe not all... Maybe I agree with Marcel," replied Bridget. "There are certainly a lot of teachers that I would not consider to be artists."

"Why would some teachers be acting as artists in the classroom while others would not?" Denise questioned.

"I think some teachers lack something in their approach - like passion or enjoyment. There are certain members on my staff as well that I don't know why they turn up to work sometimes because they don't have anything nice to say about their job or their students. And I think, 'Why are you working here - especially in a profession you are not interested in?' Or they're just in it for the money and holidays - which is terrible."

"Not everybody can be a teacher. Just in the same way that not everybody can make art," Maggie began to express her views on the topic. "I do believe that talent is very important for something to be considered a work of art. But by that, I am not defining what the talent might be."

"Okay, so let's put it in the context of teaching," Denise said.

"Teaching is a thought conceptualised, isn't it?" Maggie looked to Denise. "You're selling an idea to somebody. I believe it's to do with being able to sell the concept to the kids and their being able to understand."

"And you think that takes talent?" Denise asked.

"Most definitely," Maggie replied. "And I think it is very important to be smart. There are some teachers who are not very smart - and that's a problem."

"So maybe it is an artistic skill to have the smarts?" Denise was trying to reiterate what Maggie was getting at.

"I personally don't believe there are a lot of successful artists who are not smart because art is an intellectual pursuit." Attempting to relate this opinion to the context of teaching, Maggie explained, "The syllabi that we teach to are structured in columns that list what students must 'learn about' and they must 'learn to' - and you need to balance those things. But, where's the column where they're suppose to 'learn why?'"

"That's not part of your syllabi?" Denise questioned.

"No. Only certain teachers do that if it's in their own teaching methods." Maggie began alternating between student and teacher voices. "'Why are we learning this? Because you have to. Why are we learning this? Because the school said so. Why are we learning this? Because I said so.' I think it would be far better to say sometimes 'I don't know - but it's interesting, isn't it?' Trying to explain - trying to justify why we are here."

Attempting to make sense of what Maggie was getting at, Denise asked "So, that becomes an art form in itself - trying to justify why you're teaching what you're teaching?"

"Well yeah, I think so," Maggie concluded.

After patiently waiting, Meret suddenly began to voice her perspective, "I'm finding that teaching requires me to connect with the students. I'm forced to every time I get in front of a class. I remember, 'Oh, I need to put my energy out there.' I probably wouldn't extend my energy otherwise."

"If you weren't a teacher?" Maggie asked.

"Yeah, if I didn't have that opportunity... the sense of responsibility to expand myself, my consciousness." Meret continued, "Teaching forces me be more aware. I am learning how to deal with students, how to act around them and how to get the best out of them. Children give instant feedback. They're visible - you can ask a question and get true responses. Kids are raw media, and I think I really like that. I find it extremely advancing. That's what keeps me going."

"So, do you think teaching is a form of art?" Denise asked Meret.

"Yes. It's the *ultimate* creative act! It's the ultimate creative act because it's like performance art - which Maggie said earlier. When I have to improvise on the spot to handle an issue - *that* is art. That is art!"

"You're weaving something out of nothing, aren't you?" Maggie added. "You're using all these human and nonhuman resources to become the medium for weaving this web which is somehow meant to catch these kids and hold them in its net. And there's magic to it too. Students don't even think of me as human."

Meret agreed, "I'm totally aware of that! They don't see that I am a woman or a person. They don't see Meret, they just see a teacher."

"I know!" Maggie's eyes went wide open. "I feel like I'm some kind of superhuman. Playing that role of the magical person who holds everything together - I'm Mary Poppins spinning plates - keeping all that up. I'm constantly an entertainer."

There was a split moment in the room where all five people sitting around the table had instantly become nostalgic for the particular Mary Poppins scene just described, yet Maggie carried on. "Unfortunately, the teachers that don't entertain don't get the message across. Kids can't bear to listen to a boring teacher. If you don't engage them, then why would they bother to listen to you? And I also think that it is good to - I'm not saying glam up or anything - but to look nice, dress up, have that smile on my face. Because students have to look at me! It's much more pleasant to look at something nice."

"Teaching is very theatrical," Meret confirmed.

"Luckily for you," Denise winked at Meret, "you have your circus background to draw from."

"That's true! I do juggling - juggling impresses students every time. It's like that - you go on stage. But, there is most definitely an art to managing any group of people - particularly children. One style I've noticed is completely controlling, the kids are in fear and they just sit there going, 'Yes sir, no sir' - that's one extreme. And then Steiner is the other - where the philosophy is child-focused and much more accepting and related to creative energy. Students are our live sculptures..."

"There's a metaphor!" Denise burst out.

"Yeah, I've been sculpting a lot," Meret chuckled.

*

Inside Studio Stanley, the group of five continued their conversations while the storm outside refused to settle. Another insightful day into the lives of the participants presented a downpour of data that would guide Denise's research. With no more apple tart to eat and with night arriving soon, the discussions eventually concluded and it was time for the group to return to the cold. Before everyone left that chilly evening, a final meeting was tentatively planned.



Summer



"Who is Meret?"

Summer

The state of upset which Bridget wrote home about had been a turning point in her first year of teaching. Since writing the letter, the rational thinker sought the advice of a counselor who helped put her life back in perspective. Evidently, she had been working herself to the bone with nothing left for her at the end of the day. The counselor's advice encouraged Bridget to organise her days better. Instead of going straight into schoolwork and stressing about what she hadn't done when she came home from school, she might go for a walk, or play sport, sit down and paint or read a book - something that was for her and not for work.

Bridget analysed her issues to be motivated by her own high standards - thinking that she wasn't doing her job well enough. But this was only her perception. When speaking to her mentor teacher about such concerns, she was earnestly told, "Don't be stupid. I would tell you if you weren't doing things properly." Perhaps Bridget just needed the confirmation and some reassurance.

Apparently, the relationship with her mentor teacher had been improving since the start of the year. Initially, the 'big know-it-all' didn't strike Bridget as the type of person she would get along with. But with time, Bridget began to respect her and eventually felt this respect to be mutual.

Bridget's letter home had also been interpreted as a cry for company. Since the group's last gathering and her quick return to Sydney for a short weekend visit, Bridget's grandmother had come to Hay for a two-week visit followed by her younger sister who came for a week. With the support of co-workers, friends and family, by the end of Term 4, the once lonely Bridget finally found herself confident to settle down and feel at home in Hay.

*

Further south, Marcel had been taking some sick days of his own. The last four weeks of school presented a hellish month with finishing the yearbook, being involved in homework club, all the lunch time activities that needed to be supervised, sport and E-bytes. E-bytes was yet another school project Marcel found himself allocated to do which required him to learn how to post lesson plans and projects on the internet. However, most unanticipated in the final term of the school year, was his role as sex-educator for his Pastoral Care class.

The amount of responsibility was utterly exhausting for the first year teacher. Even the Principal had said to Marcel one night over drinks, "You've been given a shit load this year."

Marcel was proud the Principal had recognised this because it was time to reapply for his position and once again be tormented by the interviewing process. All year Marcel felt he needed to prove himself as interested and wanting to be at the school. Now, his commitment may become an advantage.

*

Term 4 started as usual for Maggie, who had never been officially appointed to a permanent mobile position at Gum Blossom High School. The year was winding down and reports were beginning to be filed. Then one day, with only four weeks left to go, the woman who had been on long service leave in Maggie's Department all year, came back. Her return created confusion. The only vacancies to be filled were in the Science Faculty. But this teacher, who had been teaching for approximately 25 years in the D & T Department, was incapable of considering taking Science classes for the remaining four weeks of the school year. Phone calls to the Teachers Federation were made, and within 24 hours, Maggie was forced to hand over *all* of her classes to this woman.

It was very unjust and irrational, not only for Maggie but for the students involved. As a result, Maggie didn't get to finish her lessons. She couldn't assess her students. But because she cared for her students and wanted them to receive meaningful comments, she still wrote their reports. The idea of quality teaching and learning, which Maggie felt the DET was consistently trying to promote, just went out the window in a flash.

On the flip side, she did receive a fair deal of support. Some students wrote letters. Some students got their parents' to write letters, but nothing could be done. In terms of her status within the school, Maggie became known as a 'good person' for 'having done the right thing,' although it was all very disappointing and quite disastrous. In the end, the double irony was that the returning teacher soon hurt her arm and was again off on sick leave! A casual teacher was then called in to replace Maggie's classes for the remainder of the year.

Meanwhile, Maggie finished her first year of teaching in the Science Department of Gum Blossom High School. People had been saying to her, "Oh, you're not your usual sprouting self - you looked stressed." She wasn't stressed, she was upset. There was a difference. She

felt used but did her best to understand it was nothing personal. It was just the way things worked. Again, she was just a small cog in the system.

On a positive note, Maggie had been asked back to the school for the following year. She was offered 11 periods out of 21 in Visual Arts! It was not a permanent position, just another year's contract that would see her through to the end of 2006. After all she had endured this year, Maggie still considered the temporary position most practical for family reasons and wanted the flexibility to change schools later if she so desired.

*

For Meret, as a casual teacher, Term 4 did not provide as much work. The HSC had finished and regular staff members were appointed to relieve other classes now that their Year 12s had finished. But it was a busy time of year for Meret's freelance garden business given that many clients tended to request their landscaping to be done before Christmas. So, Meret was hard at work in the garden. She had also managed to find additional employment three days a week at Merelein, a creative centre for people with disabilities. Merelein upheld the Steiner philosophy and, through this organisation, she had the opportunity to direct attention towards the healing powers of education while practicing art therapy with people who were severely handicapped.

The plethora of jobs suited her because she was clearly one to embrace alternatives. Meret often moved homes. She regularly transitioned through employment. Yet she was quite aware this lifestyle destabilised her. Eventually she discontinued her Flamenco class due to Saturdays being hectic enough with her job at the Coaching College. But as busy as what she was, Meret was still dedicated. She dreamt of finding her niche and working in one place five days a week. Knowing her strong will, this was sure to happen.

*

Waiting until the end-of-the-year rush was over, Denise arranged the last meeting a week after school had finished. The passing of the school year had seen an end to spring while summer began to show its blistering face.

Meret was first to arrive as usual, entering Studio Stanley more radiant than ever. Her eyes were bright and a new shade of auburn coloured her graying hair.

"I finally did some casual days at Caroline Basle!" Meret beamed.

"So you ended up volunteering some time there?" Denise asked.

"No, I did casual work."

"So, you got paid! That's fantastic!" Denise was thrilled to hear the news.

"It was amazing. I could really see the difference in the students. The first day I braced myself ready for the class but the students were really calm - I didn't have to fight them at all. I could just be myself."

Denise had a feeling this would happen all along. "It's like your dream is coming true," she said.

"I actually went back to see the art teacher at Caroline Basle last weekend," Meret spoke with excitement, "and she said they will have at least one day a week I can teach next year!"

"No way! Are you serious?!? See, your dream is coming true!"

"I know! And I'm sure it'll eventually turn into full-time," Meret spoke with confidence. "The next step for me is to get a full-time job in a Steiner school, such as Caroline Basle, where I'll be teaching Visual Arts. So I want to keep on track with that and not get too down about not getting a job this year. I mean, it's probably a good thing that I'm not full-time teaching yet because it would have been really stressful learning classroom management and having the responsibility with curriculum as well. I've been integrating this new career into my life at a pace that I'm in control of, and that's been really working for me."

*

Just as Meret finished sharing her great news, Maggie arrived. Passing the announcement along, the three ladies drifted into the kitchen while they waited for Bridget and Marcel. Denise had chilled a flask of water with lemon in the fridge for her parched guests. Although coffee was still an option, it was perhaps just too hot to indulge this time.

"Oh! The smell ...even when it's 32° outside, I still love the smell of coffee!" Maggie said as she recalled a few particular early mornings at Gum Blossom High. "Three times this past year I put coffee on before school for my Community and Family Studies class, and said if anybody wanted to come and have a chat, they could... I had to clear it with my Head Teacher, but that was all fine... Anyway, the first time, three kids turned up. They were

probably three of the wildest girls in the whole class, so that was surprising. The second time nobody showed. I actually played a bit of a game with them and said, 'It doesn't matter. I don't care.' And they were all, 'Miss, we feel so bad.'"

"Did they forget?" Meret asked.

"Some had forgotten. Some decided to sleep in. One way or another nobody came. But then they said, 'Oh no, let's do it next week and we'll bring the coffee.' So I set another date and four people ended up coming. One of them was a girl from the first time. We didn't specifically talk about the content of the Community and Family Studies class, although because it was a more relaxed social thing, I did sort of say to that girl who came both times, 'You drive me crazy. Your problem is you don't do enough work.' Like, in a much more cheeky way than I could get away with in the classroom." Maggie began speaking in her teacher voice, 'I've read some of the peoples' writing in the class. They can't write. But you *can* write. You're just lazy. You write two lines.' And she agreed. I found that putting on coffee with my students before school created a much more honest atmosphere."

"Was it worth it?" asked Denise.

Maggie answered, "Yeah, I think so - just giving them space to discuss personal issues in an appropriate context."

"What else did you talk about?" Meret asked.

"Well, we talked about their home lives. One girl told me about her brother being in jail," Maggie sighed. "So, I got to understand them more and it helped me realise that I was expecting them to care in a way that they just couldn't - because school happened to be a really low priority for them. It was actually quite an effort for them just to be there."

*

About ten minutes later Bridget arrived. Happy to be entering an air conditioned room she quickly set her stuff down and removed her bag from her sweaty back. "That last term flew by so quickly. It almost feels like we were just here," she said.

"Marcel's not here yet," a voice spoke from the kitchen.

Pulling a watermelon out from her bag Bridget headed in to meet the ladies and cut open the fruit.

"I have been so busy - one thing after another - reports due every week, different groups, organising end of the year things, trying to get all my programs in," Bridget said as she grabbed a knife and a cutting board from the sink.

"How did the HSC go for you?" Denise asked knowing Bridget had to prepare students for the exam.

Looking away, Bridget hesitantly mumbled, "It didn't go too well.

Surprised at her reaction, Denise asked, "What happened?"

"My students didn't come back to see me at all before their exam. So, I was a bit worried. I knew that two out of the three of them would not have done enough study. And one of them said to me that the other two girls left half way through the exam."

Seeing Bridget was a bit down over this, Denise asked, "How did that make you feel?"

"Well, it didn't really surprise me about the two girls because they basically gave up. And their marks reflected the fact that they didn't study. They didn't even try." Bridget was allowing herself to not take all the blame.

"What have you learnt as a teacher to maybe help change things for next year?" Denise was trying to carefully ask her questions.

"To revise my approach to the exam and start earlier." As she continued to cut the watermelon, Bridget began to analyse her role. "Maybe I assumed that they had done more than they had," she paused with her reflection to arrange slices of watermelon onto a plate. "I needed to be a lot more organised. I was a bit behind on the theory but only because I didn't really know what I was doing. I had never taught seniors before and it was hard."

"Well, you also came in with these students new and hadn't known them through the years," Denise attempted to help Bridget feel better about the situation.

"That's right. So with the Year 11 class I had this year, it should be a lot easier because I have taken them from the start of the course. I know what they have done and I'm organised for next year. I have planned out what I am going to teach and for how long - and I have already given this to the students in booklet form," Bridget's voice began to perk up.

"I felt that way too during my first year. I was always telling myself, 'Okay, next year will be better,'" Denise shared her own experience. "Did you miss those students when they were gone all Term 4?"

Bridget shook her head vigorously from side to side.

*

With no sign of Marcel, the four ladies finally decided to take their usual places at the worktable. While doing so, Maggie decided to share her exciting news.

"I'm glad we've been meeting on Sundays because my daughter and I have been taking French classes on Saturday mornings for the past two months which was something I have wanted to do for ages. So, I'm glad I am doing something for myself. And now it's summer, so that will be good." She carried on while Meret took a bite of watermelon. "During the school year there was actually only one night in the week where my family could all get home by 4:00. Otherwise William had tutoring. My daughter had piano lessons. We were in French class... I have put off so much this past year. The house is still messy. The garden is just weeds. We certainly haven't entertained friends."

"What about you, Meret - how's your family - your sister and her husband and your dad?" Denise asked, but then decided to rephrase her question. "How's your relationship with your dad been since you've become a teacher?"

"Ummm..." Meret's eyes looked up to the ceiling as she contemplated a response. Following a long pause, she looked back down at the girls and slowly began to speak. "Although the teacher is in a position of power, I think it's really important to provide a place for discovery and curiosity - teachers need to maintain a respect for the child, the learning and the environment. Teaching is magic. I get a kick out of seeing kids grasp a new concept and experience that 'ah ha!' moment, you know? That's why I'm teaching - it's for that. And I think that my father has lost sight of that - whether he ever had it or not, whether that was his reason for teaching in the first place, I'm not sure. But if I didn't have that level of appreciation - if that wasn't my drive - what would be my nourishment? How would I get the energy to keep going?"

"So where do you think your dad gets his energy then?" Denise asked.

"Well, I think he gets off on the authority. And with all his years of experience - his energy goes into being 'right' about the kids - and that his way is the 'right way' and that they need to shut-up and listen to him." Meret was still finding it difficult to connect with her family in their teaching philosophies.

*

Just then, a knock was heard.

"There he is!" Denise anxiously stood up to go open the door.

In hurried excitement, Marcel rushed in. "Did you see the accident at Central?" he gasped as he threw his backpack off his shoulders and onto the couch.

"What are you talking about?" Maggie asked as she left the table to meet Marcel at the couch.

Bridget and Meret remained seated, admiring Marcel for the theatrics he brought to the group.

"There was a big car accident at Central just now. A car piled through the bus stop where these kids stood - and of course, me - I had to be there just at that moment. It was like half an hour I was there helping the kids who were pinned under the car."

"Oh no! Was anyone hurt?" Maggie asked.

"They're okay, no deaths - it was just some stupid idiot speeding around the corner, showing off - but I had to be the one to help get them out. That's why I'm so late!" Marcel continued to recap the story as they took their seats at the worktable.

"I know what you're going to say, Meret," Marcel looked over to her, "...but seriously... *drama!* It just finds me!" he said as he accented his words with his hands. "I'm just glad it's over."

"Hey!" Marcel gaily called out and instantly changed the mood in the room. "You will all be happy to know that I have *finally* resolved my ex problem!"

"Oh really?" Denise questioned. It was a day of exceptional news at Studio Stanley.

"I e-mailed him... I wrote an e-mail and it took me two weeks before I clicked on the button to send."

"Were you reading your e-mail like a hundred times before you sent it?" Denise laughed.

"Of course," Marcel replied. "Actually, it was a bit tragic. Ray's response made me absolutely evil, angry as hell."

"Geez, what was his response?" Bridget asked.

"He didn't answer *any* of the questions that I proposed to him. That was when I came to the realisation that he's an asshole and I don't want to have anything to do with him anymore. So, by sending that e-mail, it actually helped me resolve it. I'm going to touch wood that I won't bump into him anymore - because I thought all those times I kept bumping into him was because I hadn't resolved it - so now I think it is resolved."

"Do you think it is resolved on his part as well?" Denise asked.

"No. He's an idiot - an absolute twit!"

"But you're over it, so you can move on?" Denise sought assurance.

"Yep."

"And it's taken you all year?" Bridget questioned.

"Two and a half years," confided Marcel.

*

Denise had an agenda for the day and several summative questions to ask, so she redirected the discussions back to where she was about to start before Marcel arrived. "I would like to spend this time today reflecting on the year," she began. "I wrote down some questions so I would be organised with what I wanted to ask." Looking down to retrieve her first question, she began to read, "What have you learned this year about being a teacher?"

"I have learned what it's like to work full-time and be totally responsible!" Bridget was once again quick to answer. "And I learnt what it's like to be the only art teacher on staff."

"I'm so glad it's easy to get you talking!" Denise smiled over her participants' enthusiasm. "So...what was it like to be the only art teacher on staff?" she asked.

"It was difficult because I didn't have a Visual Arts staff to fall back on."

"Did you feel you needed one?" Denise was curious to know.

"It would have been nice... but we probably didn't need it. But having just said that, I did recently learn one of the English teachers is also trained in art - so in the future, I could ask her questions."

"Like, how to fire clay?" Denise asked after recalling that Bridget had once mentioned she didn't know how to work the kiln.

"I found that out! The kiln works! I did heaps of firing," Bridget joyfully announced before continuing with outlining the aspects of her responsibility. "Being soooooo responsible," Bridget exaggerated her words, "was the biggest challenge for me as a new teacher. I was completely responsible for what the students were learning. I had the power to change what influenced them. That was really scary. I had to make the lessons interesting and accessible. At first that was a challenge, but once I got to know the students as people, it became a lot easier because then there was that mutual respect. If they didn't respect me, I had nothing."

"At the beginning of the year I think I maybe doubted myself a bit - like I wouldn't be strong enough, or good enough. But over the course of this year I proved to myself that I was," Marcel reacted to Bridget's statement.

Denise turned to Marcel and asked. "So, what have you learned this year?"

"I learned how to teach a subject that I didn't know anything about. Now I can sew, use a sewing machine, dye materials..." Marcel started to list his experiences.

"How did you learn all that?" Denise interrupted.

"Books - just reading up on it."

"Hmm... so, does that mean he taught himself?" Denise silently thought.

*

Maggie had been sitting at the table putting the conversation into a personal context. Reflecting on her overall attitude towards the year she spontaneously began to speak her mind. "To be honest..." she paused for a bit before continuing "...about half way through the year I became complacent, really. Since I was just reteaching the same program second semester, I found that I didn't need to do nearly as much preparation. Although, of course, all that was pulled out from under me towards the end." Maggie had shared the disastrous story with the group via e-mail while it was occurring, so everyone was already aware of her schedule change. "I thoroughly disagree in principle with what happened to the classes that were taken away from me. Then that lady couldn't even teach those classes because she hurt her arm, and nobody did anything about it." Maggie was still quite perturbed. "But the level of support shown to me from other people who have had similar stories, not necessarily under the same administration, but in general, makes me think there are real fundamental problems," she attempted to look beyond the surface in order to recognise the root of the issue.

"But I would have to say that I am a popular teacher around the school," Maggie switched her tone to a happier note. "Students do like me - probably because I'm friendly to them. It's just making sure that I am not *too* friendly. I think it is important to be human. It amazes me when students say, 'Do you like Ms so and so.' And I say, 'Yes, she's lovely.' And they say, 'Ah! She's horrible!' And I think, 'How can they think that?' It makes me wonder, 'What teacher self does that other teacher have in front of the students?' Like, I can meet her on a social level and she might be great for a laugh and fun to talk to, yet to the kids she

may as well be Darth Vader. I just think that is such a shame. So, I really hope to not be like that."

"Darth Vader! Now there's an image!" Actually, Denise wanted to talk seriously about their teacher identities. "How has your teacher identity changed throughout the year?" she asked the group.

"I'm a much more settled teacher," Marcel said. "I certainly don't stress about going into classrooms any more. I also know now that if the kids are running an absolute riot, they are doing it to the other teachers too - it's not just me. I used to get really paranoid if another teacher would walk by my class and see the kids acting crazy. But I'm much more settled in that respect now."

"In the beginning, I think I was really idealistic in what I would be like as a teacher," Meret stopped eating watermelon long enough to speak. "I thought that if I was passionate about something, then that would be contagious and the students would be passionate just because I was. But I found that's not true. If they're not into it, they're not into it - I need to find another way to reach them. Just raw passion is not enough. There is a lot more to teaching than I could have ever realised. But that excites me. That's what I like about Steiner - your personal growth affects your teaching so much that it must be recognised."

*

With a year's experience under their belts, the participants had certainly gained new perspectives on the teaching profession. Referring to her list, Denise wanted to learn how the group felt about the reversal of student and teacher roles. She asked, "How does it feel to no longer be the student, but the teacher?"

"I can't even remember what it was like to be the student." Marcel responded.

"Really?" Bridget was surprised at Marcel's remark. "I still feel like a student. I'm still learning - even just learning how everything works."

"Like the kiln!" Denise called out.

"Yeah, but even more than that - general stuff - like just learning about how the school works," Bridget emphasised her point.

"It's scary!" Meret exclaimed. "Students have a lot more power than I ever realised I had when I was a student."

"How so?" Denise inquired.

"Well they have the power of defiance and they have the power to block you," Meret replied.

"What are your memories of being a high school student?" Denise asked Meret.

"I was probably given more trust than I deserved - because I used to go smoke in the toilet. The teachers probably noticed me more than I thought, unless they didn't notice at all. But as a teacher, I notice. I notice the kids that smoke. You can smell it on them. So that perspective has changed now that I am a teacher."

"But as a teacher, would you actually say something to those kids you smelt cigarette smoke on? Because I remember during one of our conversations in passing here," Denise began describing, "Maggie..." she looked towards her, "you were talking about the movie 'Thumbsucker.' You referred to it as a window into the life of your students. With Child Protection laws and things like that - you were saying that you felt you had to turn a blind eye to a whole side of your students' lives - their emotional and sexual development - which, ironically, is probably the most important aspect of their lives."

"That's right, I'm not allowed to get involved," Maggie confirmed. "But without being able to acknowledge that, you can't understand what these teenagers are going through."

"Exactly - and that's much more significant in their life than cooking class..." Meret said.

"Way more - that's what's cooking!" Maggie laughed. "I thought that film was spot on for me. It really reminded me of those feelings I had when I was that age."

*

"Did any of you happen to experience any sort of 'transition shock' during this past year?" Denise continued with her list of questions.

"I wouldn't call any of it a shock," Maggie answered. "It was more like the death of a thousand cuts."

Silence fell over the room.

"Oh, that makes it sound like my experience was miserable," Maggie wanted to clarify what she meant. "It's just... I believe I have a much more realistic expectation of what I can do, and I know that there is really no point in trying to do any more. I'm not allowed to - not by the system and not by the students," Maggie concluded as she reached across the table for a piece of melon.

Redirecting the question, Denise asked, "What about for you, Marcel?"

"Maybe I was a bit shocked to hear some of my students tell me that they have depression or they're suicidal," he replied. "Basically, having to look after my Home Group - being in charge of all of them every day."

"What do you say to students who tell you they're suicidal?" Denise wondered.

"I can't remember what I said, to be honest. I guess I just wanted to know why, and what I could do to help - that sort of thing," Marcel recalled as he finally indulged in a piece of watermelon himself.

"I actually enjoy getting to know my students. Maybe that seems strange but I find that it works," Bridget reacted to Marcel's experience.

"I agree," Denise concurred. Pressing on, she asked, "Getting to know your students 'works' - but what types of things have you found that do *not* work in teaching?"

"Screaming!" Bridget said in a high pitch.

"Hey, I was just going to say the same thing!" Maggie said. "Yelling does not work."

"Screaming just makes the tension escalate," Bridget continued. "I had to learn how to be less confrontational and keep my calm, because then the students were more likely to be calm as well. Sometimes I felt students would push me to see how far they could go before I'd snap. So, by taking my really calm approach and not screaming, they didn't get what they wanted. It took me a while to learn that, though. Overall, it got easier to gain their cooperation as the year passed on. I think that was because they began to accept me and could know what to expect."

"So you've tried yelling too?" Denise turned the focus to Maggie.

"Oh yeah! But it doesn't work. I am too small and they don't pay attention to me. But by the same token, just trusting them to behave doesn't work because they're teenagers. Enough said. I need to be a role model and yelling does not contribute to that."

"Looking back over the year, I have really learned how to work the room..." Maggie began describing her experience with disruptive students, "...putting down the hecklers in the right way, getting everybody on one side, trying to play to people's strengths, knowing what's going on all the time... Because I am the focus of attention, I need to make sure I'm in control rather than the students. Controlling how they see me - because they are not just looking at me as a person, I am the subject. In a sense, I'm playing psychological games - trying to outsmart them - but I don't mean that in a horrible manipulative way. But just to manage it, just to stay on top of it - like, 'What's he going to do now?' Whether I speak to them in a

joking sense or calm, reassuring manner - 'You can do it!' - All that sort of stuff requires people skills. And your peripheral vision really improves, doesn't it?"

"That's for sure!" Denise agreed. "Did you find it easier to gain the cooperation of your students as the year progressed?" she asked.

"Probably the most difficult aspect of the year for me was dealing with some of the troublesome students."

"For me too," Marcel confirmed.

"I had some students that were very naughty," Maggie continued. "But towards the end, the classes were actually going quite smooth - of course, then they changed my entire schedule and I had to start all over."

"Although behaviour management was definitely up there," Meret paused, "I would have to say, for me, being a casual teacher all year was probably the most difficult." She then slowly considered what she wanted to say. "It's just... unlike all of you... I never really felt... I felt like I was an asset at Sansibar, but I wanted to feel that more. I desired being part of a community and being part of a school. But I never got a sense of that this year. I wanted to feel established, and I never did. So I found that frustrating - not being there yet."

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It appeared quite natural for the four first year teachers to reflect on their journey. And in a way, it seemed a healthy thing for them to do. But how could their experience benefit future teachers? Denise created a scenario that placed the participants of her study in front of the university class they were once part of just a year ago. She proposed the question, "After a year's experience, what would you now say to a class of preservice teachers knowing what you know today?"

"I would tell the preservice students to have expectations but to make them realistic," Bridget was excited to share her opinion. "That's probably a generic suggestion but I noticed this guy at my school, who was also a first year out, he came to Hay with so many predetermined perceptions of what all students were like, what all schools were like. He constantly compared our school to the Catholic system because that was where he had done casual work. He couldn't adapt. He kept expecting things to be different. My approach was to keep my mind open and see what happened, rather than go, 'I am going to do this and this.

This is what's going to happen and this is how it will be.' Things aren't always what you expect."

Denise attempted to clarify, "So if you were talking to preservice teachers today and they were asking, "What should we expect?..."

"Well, that would really just depend on the circumstance," Bridget continued. "You can expect that the money will be nice, especially if you're coming from part-time work, but ultimately it will just be what you decide to make of it."

Maggie was anxiously waiting to speak, because in her mind, she had probably suffered the most in her first year of teaching out of the five people sitting around the table. "First of all, I would say to the uni students that they're going to have to really think about why they wanted to do the teacher education course in the first place to decide whether or not they're really going to enjoy it. If they did it because they believe they're going to be Mr. Chips of Visual Arts, then I would say that for them, I hope it is so. If they find themselves in that position, they are very fortunate. But my experience has shown me all that is quite unlikely. The moments where I thought I made a difference this year have, generally speaking, been more personal than curriculum based - like the little connections I've made with students. I believe there are a few students in the school that may be a little alternative, little odd body kinds of kids - but there were things that I taught them, or I showed them kindness or something - and even if they don't specifically remember that day or even me, I might have made them feel a little more positive about school than they would have otherwise. Those little things make a difference. In terms of teaching big concepts or things that they will carry with them forever, I don't believe many pennies have dropped in people's minds."

"Most of what I remember about high school are the little things," Denise admitted.

"That's right..." Maggie continued in her usual fashion, "...so what I would say to future teachers is, 'If you think you're going to get in there and the students are going to care all that much, then you need to think again.' I went into teaching for family reasons, career reasons. Those things have been fulfilled by this year. It is a family friendly profession. It's been excellent on that level. I'm part of the school community and they are very understanding of me as a parent. I have been paid. I've made some nice working friendships with people. There are certainly worse things I could have been doing."

"So what's your advice then? That there are worse things you could be doing?" Denise laughed.

"That sounds terrible, doesn't it?" Maggie smiled as she began to rephrase her words. "Okay, my advice would be to take it fairly easy on yourself, in a personal sense - as easy as you can. There are new teachers who flood themselves and try to be everything to all people. They do far too much and are so wrapped up in engaging the students in super learning. With 50-minute lessons, it's just not always possible. And you know what else I think?" Nobody in the room had a chance to say anything before Maggie answered her own question. "It's just not fair. This is the kids' life as well. So if you have expectations for yourself, and the students and the curriculum that are so intense, you're going to get disappointed. You have to go with the flow, be intuitive and perceptive and trust yourself - and let yourself off the hook. Don't sweat the small stuff. Work out what is important. Safety is important. Caring is important. Some meaningful work is important. Assessing kids fairly is important."

"Do you feel you have done all that?" Denise asked.

"I tried to," Maggie replied. "And that is going back to what I was saying before - Don't think you are really going to make that much of a difference, and don't think that you're going to make a fundamental difference. Like, you can make a difference on that day, or in that hour or whatever it takes to get through that lesson but if you seriously reckon that you're going to be the one firing the lightening bolts, then..."

"Did you think that yourself?" Denise cut Maggie off.

"During the pracs, I was sort of under the impression that maybe I could, or I had. I think it's like some men don't understand about women faking orgasms - if you use that analogy. But now I understand more that students are clever at faking their understanding. Bit by bit, their understanding might build up..." she paused for a second, "that is, if you keep your classes."

Marcel had been tapping his fingers on the edge of the table feeling slightly uneasy by Maggie's approach to Denise's question. "Well, I spent the year taking on as much as I could," he said. "My advice for the first year teacher would be to become involved in the school environment as much as possible - no matter how bloody tired and worn out you become." Marcel had taken on several extra tasks throughout the year all without regret. He saw the effort he applied to gaining such experience as beneficial to securing permanent employment.

Upon current reflection, Meret realised she had been reprimanding herself for not being better. "My advice for the first year teacher," Meret spoke, "is to be reflective, but to be so without being too critical. Learning to be a teacher is an organic process. It takes time

to develop the confidence. And I also feel that first year teachers need to have lots of tricks up their sleeve - like brainteasers and quizzes - things that can get students' attention in a snap," she advised with a click of her fingers. "And another thing - I would also like to tell first year teachers to be discriminating about whose advice they listen to - because people give you advice all the time and some of those people are just power tripping."

"Did somebody power trip on you?" Maggie asked Meret.

"At some of the places I worked people did," Meret believed. "People in places of power, like Head Teachers, would take me under their wing. It appeared as if they were helping me and encouraging me, but really they just had another agenda. They held this lure: 'Maybe you can have a job here if you please me' - but it was just a game. When I actually looked at their style of teaching, they had nothing to offer me. Whereas other people who weren't really interested in me - like this woman at Sansibar who I observed and watched how she talked to the boys and how they responded to her - she was brilliant. So I adopted her as a bit of a mentor. She didn't know that. But yeah, I had to consciously seek role modeling."

"What did you learn from her?" Denise asked out of curiosity.

"She absolutely insisted on respect and she commanded authority. She scolded the boys at times but she did it with integrity. I found that really inspiring. Compared with the crap I heard in the staff room - like teachers bragging about how they forced the kids to stand up and say their prayers and one teacher saying, 'They would eat shit out of my hands, those kids.' I was like, 'All he wanted was compliance?' Whereas this woman insisted on a level of compliance - students needed to respect her. But that was the starting point. Then came learning and teaching."

Reaching for the last piece of watermelon, Denise said, "I'm also wondering, what kinds of things do you now wish your preservice program advised you about?"

Squinting her nose to her eyes, Bridget began listing, "Daily things like budgeting, Occupational Health and Safety, crowd control, playground duty, roll call. In terms of the syllabus and planning, the MTeach program had that fairly well covered. I suppose uni can't teach everything. Otherwise it would be a four-year Masters, wouldn't it?"

"I agree. I do a whole lot - well, all of those - the meetings, the duties, sport, playground duty, faculty meetings, staff meetings, team meetings - all that takes up a lot of time! I can understand why uni might not tell you - because they probably don't want to put you off," Maggie attested.

"What about speaking to parents?" Marcel contributed. "I had to do a teacher/parent interview the last week of the term and it was so stressful. I didn't have a clue what to do. We were never taught anything like that at uni. Like how do you tell a parent that their child needs to work harder in a nice, polite way?"

"I think maybe it would be a good idea if more people who were teaching at the university actually had recent high school teaching experience - just to be able to ground the concepts in some kind of contemporary context," Maggie added. "I still think some of those academics are at university because they don't like teaching. Which is even worse because then they make the courses too theoretical. But in terms of understanding the syllabus, I agree with Bridget. I am one of the few people in my school that really understands how the current syllabus works. Maybe others are just threatened by the jargon. I don't know. But whether you have philosophical disagreements with the syllabus or not, the fact is, that is what we are meant to be teaching. In some ways I actually wish I were back at uni because it was a lot easier. If I could be paid there, I'd still be there! Then I could have coffees and be chatting all the time.

"Hey!" Denise said with a sense of urgency, "We're doing that now!"

"I know - and this has been great," Maggie wanted to assure Denise, "but, typically, out in the field there is this reverse intellectual discovery. If you think you can have a conversation with anybody about teaching, you sure can - but I would say more than 50% of those conversations would be fairly cynical about bratty kids - which is sort of good to pick you up and get you through that wartime mentality - like, 'We are in this together,'" she said with a deep voice, "but in terms of serious reflection on teaching or the ethics of teaching, or the value of teaching, there are less people to do that with. Where, of course at uni, that was the whole focus of what we were doing."

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Denise was still enrolled at uni, and with Maggie's words, she felt it more important than ever to embrace it while she could. Like the watermelon that had reached its end, so had Denise's data collection. Dialogue between the five artist-teachers had transitioned through a cycle of seasons. A year had passed since the participants sat in their teacher education program like seeds planted in a garden anticipating the growth of new life. Such as the sun that ripened the melon, experience had nourished their careers.

The four early career teachers left Studio Stanley that warm, summer evening with a glow of satisfaction. The fruits of the year's labour had been preserved through Denise's research but their life journeys would continue on.

*



"What Happened?"

CHAPTER 7: ANALYSIS

Making Meaning

Introduction

We have arrived at *The End* of the story to my research. The plot has been thickened by the development of the participants' stories and now some type of resolution to our issues and concerns will be presented in order to encourage positive change.

This chapter explores the themes that have emerged for the five early career artist-teachers using a bricolage of strategies. Through *verstehen*, I have interpreted our actions and communications to respond to the research questions generated in *The Beginning*. This is not a comparative study. Therefore analysis of my own early career experience (which took place in a different country at a different time) is only represented where it resonates with an Australian context and the experiences of the Australian participants in this study.

The first theme is that of transition into a teaching career and how it corresponds to early idealism (Furlong & Maynard, 1995). Reflection on the participants' teacher education programs and their pursuit of employment is included within this first section. Stages of transition (Furlong & Maynard, 1995) are then explored more deeply in the second theme which outlines the challenging first year. Possible causes for early attrition from the profession and how the participants' teaching identities developed within the classroom context are linked to the stages of transition. The third theme then examines the unique challenges presented to Visual Arts teachers while the fourth interprets the changes made to the participants' identities as they now relate to being both teachers and artists. Finally, the question "*Is teaching a form of art?*" is investigated and the participants' advice to future first year teachers is offered. In Appendix A, summative tables support this analysis by filtering the themes through Furlong and Maynard's (1995) stages of transition and Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) descriptions of image, rules, principles and personal philosophy, metaphor, cycles and rhythms and narrative unity.

Transitions to a Career in Teaching (Theme 1)

Choosing the Ideal Career

Teaching was the first career choice for both Bridget and me. Meret, Marcel and Maggie on the other hand were changing careers. Powers (2002) suggests that a turn to teaching later in life is often a result of mid-life transition. To illustrate this further, Crow, Levine, and Nager (1990) divide such career changers into two main categories: those who believe their earlier plans to teach are delayed by negative parental and societal attitudes, market forces and/or financial obligations; and those who do not consider teaching until some pivotal event or confluence of factors causes them to reconsider professional plans.

Born into a family of teachers, Meret initially carried a sense of rebellion and boycotted the idea of becoming a teacher. Earlier plans to teach would appear to have been delayed by what Meret perceived to be ‘negative attitudes’. Because Marcel did not complete his High School Certificate, he was not eligible to apply to university and follow his desire to become a Visual Arts teacher until he became a mature-aged student. According to Crow, et al.’s (1990) delineation of career changers, ‘societal’ expectations would seem to be the reason Marcel could not select a career in teaching as his first option. Initially enjoying a career in graphic design, an unexpected pregnancy precipitated a change in rhythm for Maggie and a ‘confluence of factors’ caused her to consider education.

Serow (1993) explains that career-changing teachers constitute an increasingly important source of teacher supply. Not only do they exhibit lower attrition rates than those entering the profession at a younger age but they also “bring many strengths to teaching, including maturity, life experience, and good work habits” (Resta, Huling & Rainwater 2001:61). Maggie doubted her maturity and felt she would not have been a responsible teacher at a younger age. Unlike Bridget and me, by the time she entered the teaching profession, Maggie felt no need to concern herself with being a ‘friend,’ appearing ‘cool’ nor did she desire common popular cultural interests to those of her students. As a parent, she also had authoritative experience that she could apply to the classroom context. However, a wider age span between student and teacher also reflects a larger separation in time from the teacher’s own experiences as a high school student (Chambers, 2002). On many levels Bridget and I could easily relate to the generation of our students. We did not view our inexperience in the workforce as a hindrance but rather as a benefit that allowed us to strongly identify with those who we taught. Knowing that we were gaining experience

with each day, Bridget and I were simply proud of ourselves for working towards a goal, accomplishing that goal by finding full-time employment, becoming autonomous adults in the process and receiving a regular income (Ryan, 1970).

While making the decision to enter the teaching profession, all five of us idealised (Furlong & Maynard, 1995) our career choice. We focused on the favourable attributes and chose not to spend much time or energy contemplating the possible challenges. As the research attests (Manuel & Brindley, 2005; Chambers, 2002; Barone, 2001), we were typical early career teachers filled with inspiration, imagining a better world and desiring an opportunity to influence young people in positive ways. The altruistic and intrinsic benefits of the profession were certainly attractive.

The extrinsic rewards were also highly influential. Life experiences had led some of us to question the difficulty of earning a living within our local art scenes. Unlike our perceptions towards the teaching profession, the process of becoming a professional artist seemed to possess an uncertainty about career longevity and development (Rosenstein, 2004). We turned to teaching to earn annual incomes because we resolved it would be more practical, stable and secure than a career in art. Additionally, we unanimously believed that a career in teaching would allow us to maintain our artistic practice. We viewed teaching Visual Arts as an opportunity to balance our passion for the creative arts with the need for employment security. Once employment security was achieved, an agreeable impact was made on our lives and some of our ideals became a reality.

However, as time would tell, not all of our early conceptions of the teaching profession would be realised. For example, some of us presumed that teaching Visual Arts would allow opportunity to do our own artwork along with the students. Some of us also felt that the holidays a teaching career offered would provide even more time for engagement in personal artmaking. This was not always the case. Although these ideals may have gone unfulfilled, the prospects of the teaching profession still motivated us to move forward. In light of the literature review, it is important for novice teachers to recognise that some early ideals are bound to be traded in for more realistic representations. Yet, it is important to maintain a sense of idealism so that we continue to strive towards being the best we can be.

Reflection on the Teacher Education Program

The most important issues of attracting and retaining people to and in any profession are usually based on a sense of anticipated fulfillment, the degree to which the career matches a person's needs and the overall self-image and image of the career within the community (Ramsey, 2000). Teaching has held a long and proud tradition of service to our society while the work of teachers has become increasingly demanding. Today's competitive market, demanding workplaces and ideas-focused economies are expecting teachers "not only to have certain scholastic abilities, but increasingly to demonstrate capacity in creative thinking, problem solving, flexibility and effective communication" (Temmerman, 2006). Stakeholders want to feel more confident than ever before that our systems of teacher education equip teachers with knowledge and skills that are relevant to the needs of young people, especially in our ever-changing world (Ramsey, 2000).

In February 2007, the Parliament of Australia's House of Representatives inquired into and reported on the scope, suitability, organization, resourcing and delivery of teacher education courses within Australian universities. This *Top of the Class: Report on the Inquiry into Teacher Education* stated that the teacher education system, from a national perspective, was not in crisis. However, several recommendations were provided to suggest how the transition from teacher education student to classroom teacher could be improved. The report claimed that the attrition rates of beginning teachers implied inadequacies in the quality of initial teacher preparation and/or in the level of support provided to emerging teachers. A particular inadequacy highlighted by the report and echoed by the participants within this study regarded too little practicum experience as creating a larger gap between theory and practice for preservice teachers.

Top of the Class recognised that the development of quality teachers was directly related to quality professional experience. However, several matters have complicated the incorporation of more professional experience into teacher education programs. While universities are obliged to offer practicum to all preservice students, there is no corresponding obligation for schools or employing authorities to ensure placements are available. Additionally, supervising teachers are often uncertain about their responsibilities and in general have had little, if any, formal preparation to undertake the role. There is also an element of chance about the commitment of teachers who supervise preservice students

and an increasing unwillingness by teachers to accept the intensifying position. Significant issues related to costs and scheduling practicum are also of concern.

Moreover, many teacher educators are generally not sufficiently involved in the professional experience of their student teachers or in the schools where it occurs. Ramsey (2000) claimed, “Teachers see teacher educators as largely disconnected from schools and as people who in too many instances have little capacity to come to terms with the complexities and demands of teaching in contemporary times” (p.24). Maggie’s personal philosophy suggested that those who taught in teacher education programs should have had recent high school teaching experience themselves in order to ground their concepts in a contemporary context. Both Maggie and Meret agreed that their MTeach classes were *too theoretical*⁶ and built on a *presumed level of knowledge*. In their view, the capacity to make worthwhile connections between theory and practice becomes jeopardised in such situations.

These assertions assume that it is during practicum that experience with the practical skills of teaching is developed and refined. The participants in this study desired more strategies for dealing with the responsibilities of teaching such as playground duty, roll call, budgeting, Occupational Health and Safety, ‘crowd control’ and talking with parents. Such expectations may be more thoroughly covered if preservice students could spend more time in schools engaging in professional experience. However, in terms of understanding the NSW Board of Studies Visual Arts syllabus, Maggie and Bridget did feel their teacher education program had prepared them well. In the university’s role of developing quality teachers, issues about the curriculum and therefore consideration of the Board of Studies directives, is imperative. Meret felt fortunate to have gained awareness about aspects of teaching such as the hidden curriculum (Smith & Lovat, 2003) and appreciated the emphasis on self-reflection. She felt encouraged to approach the profession with her heart (Palmer, 1998).

Despite some negative feelings towards particular components of their teacher education programs, the participants were able to rationalise that the university could not possibly cover every aspect of the profession. Lytle (2000) verified that it is clearly unrealistic to

⁶ Direct dialogue from the data presentation is represented in italics.

assume that any teacher education program can prepare prospective teachers for everything, including the array of duties and responsibilities that are often specific to a particular school's context.

In teacher education, there is often a focus on problems but, according to Ramsey (2000), a much more optimistic view should be taken and ultimately a stronger sense of shared responsibility between policy makers, institutions of teacher education, employing authorities, the schools and the individual needs to be developed. "The problems are by no means insurmountable, so long as they are tackled purposefully and from the perspective of hope" (Ramsey, 2000:11).

Seeking Employment

We may have successfully completed our teaching programs but for the most part, we did not initially find ideal positions. As first year teachers, we were also commonly employed on a non-permanent status. This non-permanence presented a degree of insecurity regarding our teaching positions. Maggie was regretfully shifted around her school. I had a six-month contract and then a second provisional appointment that resulted in much anxiety over reapplying for my position. Like me, Marcel also experienced stress in being required to reapply for his fulltime Visual Arts position at the end of the school year.

Seeking employment presented real challenges for the participants involved in this study. Just as Bullough, et al. (1991) had indicated in regards to the experiences of qualified teachers as they exited their preservice programs (see Chapter 3), Marcel felt abandoned by both the university and the NSW DET when it came time to find employment at the completion of his course. While considering a stronger sense of shared responsibility, one might ask, whose responsibility is it to provide support in writing job applications and finding employment? In suggesting a sense of shared responsibility amongst institutions of teacher education, employing authorities, the schools and the individual to help solve such issues and concerns, Ramsey's (2000) recommendations continue to be pertinent to this study on transitions of early career teachers. He suggested that practicum be designed in such a way that a seamless transition from preservice teacher education to initial appointment is made, perhaps through an internship in a school or type of school where the teacher is most likely to eventually be employed. The internship provided by the MTeach program did assist Maggie, who felt fortunate to be offered a fulltime position in the same

high school where she did her student teaching. While the rest of the participants followed intensive and lengthy pursuits, Maggie was the first of the participants to receive confirmed employment, although it was not in Visual Arts.

Knowing there was little demand in Sydney for Visual Arts teachers, Maggie had also studied in Design and Technology. As she could predict, this is where she found her first position. According to Gibson (2007), preservice students at the University of Sydney are informed that there can be up to a 14-year waiting list for permanent Visual Arts positions in Sydney. Bridget was open to moving far from the city and subsequently she was the only participant to receive a permanent position. Conversely, Meret was too comfortable in Sydney to accept a job anywhere else and consequently did not find a full-time position despite her persistence in applying. At first, the impermanence of casual teaching caused her to feel like she wasn't a complete teacher. But upon reflection, she appreciated that she had taken her time to incorporate her new career into her life at a rate she could control.

The Challenging First Year (Theme 2)

Finding employment was not a simple task but this was only the beginning of the many challenges we would encounter throughout our journey. In teaching, as in collaging, active engagement in a multitude of processes opens up possibilities for the emergence of new experiences and unexpected new associations (Davis & Butler-Kisber, 1999). An enhanced awareness of the teaching profession or the collage's imagery may occur at the time of action, or may be recognised more fully upon reflection. Increasing familiarity with the processes can lead to a heightened insight. Thus, active engagement in the profession enabled us to more fully recognise what it meant to be a teacher.

Teaching Outside the Field of Expertise

While there is an apparent need for qualified teachers and programs continue to be launched to ensure adequate preparation of teachers, the problem of poor quality teaching still exists. Ingersoll (1998) claims this is partly because schools continue to assign teachers to teach outside their field of expertise. The Sydney Morning Herald reported, "Close to half of all secondary school principals have been forced to ask staff to teach outside their area of expertise to cover shortages..." (Patty, 2008:¶1). According to the Australian Education Union (2001) the growing number of areas of specialisation for which adequate numbers of appropriately qualified teachers are not available is

significantly affecting the morale and workload of teachers as well as the learning outcomes of students. The participants in this study were no exception to this concern. We may have been qualified Visual Arts teachers but teaching Visual Arts was not all we were expected to do.

Regardless of our competence in some of the classes we were expected to teach, Maggie, Marcel, Bridget and I secured employment by accepting the first fulltime offer we received. This was the reason why I spent many off-work hours trying to learn about Data Processing during my first semester of teaching and Maggie and Marcel spent their time teaching themselves how to sew. Perhaps we were a bit confused at first and struggled to decide how to conduct our classes in the unfamiliar subject areas but we believed in our capability and took the time to apply ourselves accordingly in order to handle the responsibility. Coaching sport and teaching sex education, Community and Family Studies, life skills students, seniors, English and even being the yearbook editor were just some of the additional expectations given to our first year teaching load. Although university may inform early career teachers that they are likely to coach sport and teach subjects outside their field of expertise, when the reality surfaces, these obligations can become very distressing for first year teachers. Due to the unique circumstances of individual schools, specific responsibilities are difficult to predict. Teaching outside one's subject area has become a reality of the teaching profession (Gibson, 2007) and something future early career teachers should expect prior to entering the profession.

Stages of Transition

As the researcher, I uncovered multiple and complex layers in describing 'stages of transition' into the teaching profession. The daily challenges of first year teaching ran into virtually every aspect of our lives. For example, there was no avoiding bringing work home especially when end-of-the-term reports were due. Besides the multitude of unexpected realities, we also dealt with large classes, meagre budgets for ordering supplies, conservation, changing classrooms and managing our working environments. Preparing flexible lessons, keeping students on task at all times and being the new teacher whilst having to adjust to the students and staff as they adjusted to us were also part of our daily routines. These were just some of the elements that contributed to the formation of our teaching identities and the differing perspectives we held towards our new careers.

Within this theme I focus on the school context and attempt to link particular behaviours and actions of the participants to Furlong and Maynard's (1995) defined stages of transition. But specific stages are blurred and can never be clearly defined. My rationale for referencing such stages of transitions directly relate to my reasons for delineating the story of my thesis into the Aristotelian tradition of having a beginning, a middle and an end. In arts-informed inquiry, it is easy to question these categorisations. In our postmodern world, Aristotle's perceptions have become less than clear (Raths, 2002). Yet to create a starting point, such frameworks can still be useful and no doubt informative when analysing large amounts of data. However, in general it is my opinion that 'fuzzy' axioms, as defined by Raths (2002), tend to more appropriately accommodate real-world situations. Raths (2002) states:

Fuzzy systems provide researchers with a broader, richer field of data and with procedures for manipulating the evidence that are more promising and more isomorphic with the complexities of the real world. The complexity of teacher education, its fuzziness, often will not yield to traditional research procedures whether they are qualitative or quantitative. Perhaps dramatic breakthroughs in teacher education await new, non-Aristotelian research procedures to accommodate its fuzziness. (p.757)

Although the delineation of behaviours amongst the participants for the most part was 'fuzzy' as such, the data did indicate that we all experienced a stage of *Early Idealism*, as discussed in the first theme to this chapter. For the remainder of this second theme, the next stages of early career teacher transitions (*Survival, Recognising Difficulties, Reaching a Plateau* and *Moving On*) are lightly referenced. This is due to the disputable quality in which I found the linear approach of stage development to possess. However, in an effort to reach larger audiences outside academia and in drawing from a bricolage of strategies, I still attempt to link the stages of transition to my study. Summative tables located in Appendix A further correlate the data with Furlong and Maynard's (1995) stages of transition as well as Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) descriptors of image, rules, principles and personal philosophy, metaphor, cycles and rhythms and narrative unity. These tables utilise the theoretical models to offer quick and accessible answers to my research questions. Referencing the tables might not require all the reading that my chapters entail, however one must still keep in mind such categorisations are quite blurred and represent only my perspective so can never be definitive.

How the stages of transition link to early attrition.

Cole and Knowles (1993) argue that preservice teacher education programs that place little emphasis on the contextual realities of schools actually create a limited and narrow understanding of what teaching is about. Furlong and Maynard (1995) suggest that within the *Survival* stage, beginning teachers experience a ‘reality shock’ when they become overwhelmed by their school’s complexity. The several unexpected realities were indeed viewed as particularly overwhelming by the participants in this study. But rather than being seen as a ‘shock,’ Maggie defined her experience as *the death of a thousand cuts*. She did not view the unexpected realities as making a sudden impact in such a way that the term ‘shock’ suggests. Instead, the realisations came from a series of occurrences over the course of the year.

Working on a day-to-day basis, many unexpected realities of the profession and the complexity of the schools’ systems did not concern Meret. She was never obligated to be part of on going school activities. For the rest of us, we did not regard extra commitments such as playground duty, meetings and committees as serious time consumers prior to employment. In reality, these additional obligations played a major role within our daily cycles. Yet, this was not always viewed as negative. Such extra responsibilities often resulted in the opportunity to develop relationships and gain experience.

Marcel taught a Home Group every day of the week. He was also issued with a full teaching load even though he was informed first year teachers were not normally assigned such a schedule. Marcel was new to his professional environment and was keen to make a favourable impression so he did not argue with what he was asked to do. This reality ‘forced’ Marcel to accept the extra work he was assigned. Some first year teachers might not ‘survive’ such an overwhelming workload and may be more inclined to leave the profession as a result. This is why successive reports on teacher education have consistently called for beginning teachers to be given a reduced teaching load (e.g. Ramsey, 2000). *Top of the Class* recommended that the Australian Government develop a *National Teacher Induction Program* and invest a sum equivalent to 10% of beginning teachers’ salaries to help overcome situations similar to Marcel’s. The funds would enable a 20% reduction in a teaching load thereby allowing time for a novice teacher to undertake professional development, reflection, observation of other classes and meeting with mentors.

First year teachers need, and appear to desire, time and space for support and reflection as they pass through the described stages of *Survival* and *Recognizing Difficulties*. Maggie explained that being able to *debrief* with her husband allowed her a stronger sense of security. Additionally, all participants in this research agreed that the interviewing process provided them with an opportunity to discuss their initial teaching experiences in beneficial ways. Direct transcripts of the participants' reactions towards their interviews can be found in Appendix J. During the interviews, the participants could reflect, vent, express the joys of success, vocalise opinions and make sense of actions. The interviews were never viewed as stressful, rather they were highly anticipated by those involved.

During my first semester of teaching, I could have benefited immensely from structured support (Kowalchuk, 1999). At Edward High, I often felt alone with no one to turn to. Consequently, I viewed my experience as having been rather negative. In contrast, at Mountain Middle School I found a huge sense of collegiality between staff members, a well-structured working environment and was provided with much more support. My commitments and extra responsibilities increased but with that, my working environment and attitudes towards the teaching profession turned from the pure confusion and constant disappointment I felt at Edward to feeling as if *I could not have been in a better place than where I was* while working at Mountain. Support systems can be viewed as having much impact on first year teachers successfully moving through the survival mode of transition.

I built close relationships with my colleagues who supported me through my second semester of teaching. Maggie turned to her husband for support and all participants experienced time for reflection during interviews. Bridget however, was the only participant within this study to make reference to a mentoring program. At first, she felt *talked down to*, stressed by the time commitment involved and had difficulty relating to her mentor. In addition she felt her mentor's Science expertise was not helpful. Over time and with reassurance, Bridget and her mentor did eventually develop mutual respect and their relationship improved.

As part of the *National Teacher Induction Program*, a mentor would be allocated to each first year teacher to provide such structured support. For mentoring relationships to be successful, Blanton (2007) explains it needs to be a 'two-way street.' "Too often the mentee feels intimidated and the mentor overburdened... Both parties must exhibit self

confidence and be reflective practitioners” (Blanton, 2007:186). Due to the responsibility that such a position entails, *Top of the Class* outlines the necessity for mentors to be trained for the role, given appropriate time to perform the role and offered recognition for undertaking it.

Reports and articles on teacher education (Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ramsey, 2000) continue to highlight the importance, but often inadequate provision, of induction programs. State schools in NSW may be expected to offer induction programs but Ewing and Manuel (2005) provide evidence that these programs are not always consistent. A lack of support combined with difficulties in induction continues to challenge the retention of early career teachers.

Several unanticipated experiences may have caused the study’s participants’ early perceptions of the profession to become altered. An analysis of the data demonstrates that our cycles changed as we learnt ‘the system’ and how to work within it. As a result, we discovered ways of adapting and becoming flexible through the difficult times. For example, Bridget was not surprised to hear that a couple of her students did poorly on their HSC. On reflection, she concluded she needed to be more organised and would revise her approach to the exam by starting earlier in the year. Glimpses of the *Moving On* stage could be viewed as surfacing for Bridget learnt through experience how to better focus on the quality of student learning. Our initial experiences in the classroom were difficult, challenging, often frustrating, ever exhausting and always busy (Bullough & Young, 2002) but despite these hardships and a few tears along the way, all five of us involved in this study developed resilience (Ewing & Manuel, 2005) and chose to remain in the teaching profession.

How the stages of transition link to forming a teaching identity.

Appropriately, this section will discuss how the stages of transition link to the formation of the participants’ teaching identities. To clarify, I use the term ‘teaching identity’ to refer to the actions of the teacher and the term ‘teacher identity’ to reference the personal attributes. The fourth theme of this chapter examines the impact the new careers had on the personal well being of the artist-teachers; so it is in this later section where the participants’ teacher identity is outlined and explored. This section addresses the actions of

the first year teachers within the classroom context and therefore focuses on their teaching identities.

While transitioning through the proposed stages, the participants had to form a teaching image that required them to act decisively and in control, despite any feelings of insecurity or tentativeness. Maggie realised students didn't necessarily see her as a person. Rather, she was the subject and she needed to *control* how that was perceived. For Meret, a *loss of control* reduced her confidence, which made it difficult for her to keep teaching, stay focused and be responsible. These findings resonate with the research conducted by Bullough, et al. (1991) who reported that difficulties in negotiating a productive and fitting teaching identity produced feelings of self-doubt and vulnerability, especially during the *Survival* stage. In finding her teaching identity, Meret discovered there was a *talent* to the profession that she had not yet fully acquired. She recognised that her skills and technique were still developing.

All five of us involved in this study continued to frame and address problems throughout the year by testing different conceptions of ourselves while attempting to act purposefully in the classroom (Bullough & Baughman, 1993). In doing so, we learnt that there could be multiple ways to deal with situations. For example, yelling was not an effective means to control student behaviour. As teachers, we needed to be role models in the classroom and through experience we learned that such behaviour did not contribute to that. Staying calm was much more effective.

Continuing to test our teaching image, we also experienced situations consistent with Bullough, et al.'s (1991) case study participant Nancy, whose narrative suggested that her perceived ideal of being 'friends' with students had manifested itself ineffectively. Initially, Bridget held similar ideals to Nancy and also desired to be 'friends' with her HSC class. But when they had *taken a dislike* to her, she became highly discouraged. Marcel also recognised problems in trying to be a 'friend' and connected to the commonly heard saying 'Don't smile until Easter.' His teaching philosophy had to change as he concluded that in the future he would need to take *a harder stand from the beginning*. Reflection on my experiences revealed attitudes of catering to student desires so that they would *like me* but what resulted was a *loss of control*. This is evidence that Bridget, Marcel and I were all

attempting to identify with our students in order to reject the image of the older, cynical teacher (Furlong & Maynard, 1995).

Taking a different approach, Maggie mentioned she was a popular teacher at school and that students would call out to her. She believed this to be because she was *friendly* to them. *It's just making sure that I am not too friendly*, she said. Maggie's philosophy aimed for a balance in perspective. Her teaching rules included being a *good listener and reader of character, understanding student motivations* and knowing *why they behave the way they do*. In dealing with her own behaviour management issues, the general principle for Maggie was that she needed to be two different people – her personal self and her teaching self. This allowed her to not be personally offended if a student verbally *attacked* her. Because Bridget considered her students as 'friends,' her personal self became offended when they *annoyed* her. An analysis of the data would therefore indicate that 'friendliness' should not be conflated with 'friendship' and that a separation between teachers and students should be established early.

According to Vygotsky (1997), social interactions between teachers and students are essential for learning. Zander (2004) questions how teachers are to create an environment that is friendly to student opinion and welcomes self-expression. For Maggie, this meant creating a space outside classroom hours. Appearing to have transitioned to the *Reaching a Plateau* stage, Maggie discovered that the learning goals, assessment and the requirement to teach a certain amount of content within a specific time period left little room for developing dialogical relationships during class time. As a result of creating time before school hours by way of multiple coffee dates, she built more meaningful relationships by getting to know the social and cultural contexts of those she taught. But such relationships would not have developed if the students did not trust their teacher. Zander (2004) explains:

Abstractions like trust, respect, and openness come not from a single act but from a series of actions that are consistent in their message or intent. An environment that supports the possibility for dialogue comes from a variety of factors which consistently work together to communicate a message of safety and trustworthiness. (p.51)

In building trusting relationships, Maggie also found that she wanted to talk on a personal level (but not too personal) with her students believing it did make her *more human*. Marcel also felt that speaking sincerely helped students feel comfortable with talking to

him as a person. Teachers who share personal stories with their students build communication based on trust, care, openness and egalitarianism. But again, this can not happen instantaneously. Such relationships develop over time and, unfortunately, do not come without risk or negotiation (Zander, 2004).

When I was a student I enjoyed hearing about my teachers' lives. It made me feel more connected to them. But I did not realise the risk involved until I became a teacher myself. In creating my teaching identity yet attempting to still be 'myself' within the classroom context, I naturally wanted to share stories with students detailing my life experiences in order to relate meanings and develop connections. However, as a young teacher I needed to make a conscious shift in how I approached this 'teaching' dialogue. In revealing my feelings, I learnt that great care was needed in speaking from the heart in a non-judgmental manner and that I needed to be selective in the information I chose to disclose.

Throughout our first year of teaching, the five of us endeavoured to create classroom environments where students could work productively and develop positive relationships. We attempted to engage students in higher-order thinking and encouraged them to communicate what they were learning. We consistently strove to make learning meaningful and important to students by drawing connections between their prior knowledge and identities with contexts outside of the classroom. The data within this study thus demonstrates several instances where the research participants used the criteria outlined in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training quality teaching framework for public schools (2003). This professional support and curriculum document presents the NSW model of pedagogy as having three dimensions which link classroom practices to improved student outcomes. These three dimensions promote high levels of *intellectual quality*, establish a high *quality learning environment* and generate *significance* by connecting students with the intellectual demands of their work. However, it is only in the final stage of teacher transition, *Moving On*, where Furlong and Maynard (1995) claim beginning teachers focus on the quality of student learning. While demonstrating other actions in the classroom that would place us in earlier stages of transition which do not focus on student learning and outcomes, it becomes apparent that we were not necessarily passing through only one stage at a time but were transitioning

through different stages simultaneously. It is clear here how the categorising of life experiences becomes ‘fuzzy’ and incapable of being clearly defined.

In developing our teaching image, we may have moved through more than one of the proposed stages of transition concurrently but our desire to do the best that we could within our position was consistently at the centre of our attention. Building trusting and honest student-teacher relationships was always important to us. This may have taken much conscious effort to do appropriately but the rewards in doing so were those that could affect eternity (Barone, 2001).

Unique Challenges for Visual Arts Teachers (Theme 3)

This study moves beyond the school context and the teacher-student relationships that were identified by Furlong and Maynard (1995). Building on the researchers’ concerns regarding teachers in general, the issues concerning this research are now analysed within the specific field of Visual Arts and are later extended to include examination of the artist-teachers’ identity formations.

Personal Experience

The way our teachers communicated with us when we were students and the personal experiences we received throughout our own education contributed to the shaping of our teaching identities. I wished I had been taught in university the more theoretical concepts to artmaking. Consequently, my own teaching methods ensured my students received instruction on the basics of art theory. Gradle (2007) states that many art teachers are likely to teach the way their art teachers had taught unless their prior experiences in an art room had a negative impact. Unfortunately, I conceived my art education negatively. To be the teacher I aspired to be, I had to teach myself much of what I felt was most necessary to pass on to students. The resentment I held towards my own education fed my desire to teach more effectively and to make a difference for future students.

While conducting this research, I learnt I was not alone in feeling insecure about my artistic capabilities upon entering a career as a Visual Arts teacher. However, Bridget reminded me that teaching is a *constant learning curve* and the reality of needing to develop our skills keeps us from *becoming too stagnant*. Such words inspired me to let go of my resentment towards my own education or lack thereof. Learning is a life-long

process that will thrive with personal motivation. In retrospect, I actually enjoyed teaching myself, and the motivation I had to conjure up to do it was well worth the reward.

Tertiary Art Education Victoria (TAEV) has outlined the most recent description of high quality Visual Arts teachers in Australia. These papers have been endorsed by the Australian Institute of Art Education and are recognised and accepted countrywide. They may also be viewed as appropriate guidelines for teachers of any subject. In 2006, TAEV outlined:

High quality art teachers are committed to the continual development of their teaching practice. They engage in professional development activities designed to extend knowledge and expertise. They have a purposeful approach to their career development. They interact effectively with professional colleagues, participate in curriculum development, engage in professional reading and actively seek new classroom resources. They are reflective practitioners who learn from their experiences and who seek new ideas to improve their teaching. (¶ 2.2)

The data within this study revealed several incidents where we took the initiative to learn the things we wanted to teach our classes. For many of us, and most certainly for me, the process of teaching actively developed our artistic skills. But, when we were confronted with the reality of needing to work with the knowledge that we currently possessed, it was obvious that we were inclined to draw from the familiar. When questioned why she chose American photographer, Barbara Kruger over an Australian photographer such as Tracey Moffat to use as a case study sample, Bridget replied, *honestly, I feel more familiar with Kruger's work since I studied it at uni*. Marcel also explained that he selected such artists as Francis Bacon and Vincent Van Gogh for his students to study because these were artists that he enjoyed studying himself. Heise (2004) confirmed that educators tend to teach a curriculum that is most similar to the one they experienced in school or one that emphasises aspects that teachers themselves prefer. However, when Bridget attempted a unit on Reinhardt and Rothko, she discovered it was not easy to connect what she had enjoyed learning in her university courses to her high school teaching situations. As a result, her prepared unit on Abstract Art was discontinued. Bridget then found herself studying the life of Frida Kahlo so that she could implement a new unit that she felt students could more easily *grab on to*. Analysis of the data reveals that the participants were not opposed to learning new concepts on their own terms in order to provide a more meaningful and relevant curriculum for their students, yet they did feel more comfortable implementing instruction on practices they had prior experience with.

The challenge for teachers as they age in their career is to address the conditions in which they teach and question what it means to learn from a generation of youth who experience life in a way that might vastly differ from what they have experienced (Heise, 2004). Visual Arts teachers need to be familiar with not only art history but also with contemporary art as well in order to present pertinent examples of artists who have dealt with applicable issues in a variety of ways (Hermann, 2005). In order to maintain their currency and knowledge, Visual Arts teachers must engage in purposeful professional development activities throughout their career.

The All-Encompassing Curriculum

Dewey (1934) once said, “Every experience lives on in further experiences” (p.27). Drawing from her practicum experience, Bridget felt confident that the students would respond positively to the Pop Art movement because it was bright, visually strong and related directly to their personal interests. Bridget’s prior experience was to live on in her students and appropriately, she recognised such a unit would create opportunities for students to study visual representations of topics of interest while making meaning and promoting the development of their interpretive skills (Freedman, 2005c).

In creating a curriculum that is culturally relevant to students, teachers are also encouraged to move beyond uncritical and superficial aesthetic understandings that fail to recognise the ideological struggles embedded within everyday visual experiences (Darts, 2004). When the opportunity arose, Maggie discussed Von Dutch and the existence of this contemporary brand. She attempted to *humanise* her students in educating them in the history behind the brand name that they ‘blindly’ wore. She wanted to move her students beyond modes of passive spectatorship to help them learn how to view and interpret their visual world and make educated choices about which influences they choose to accept (Darts, 2004). Similarly, Meret developed a lesson on reading marketing images, particularly advertisements and Bridget implemented a case study that focused on stereotypes of the female in art. By actively uncovering the ideological struggles embedded within the visual and then encouraging critical and creative forms of cultural production, these teachers attempted to empower students with an ability to respond to their complex visual environment (Darts, 2004).

The data indicated that students were indeed interested in responding to their visual environment. For example, Marcel and Maggie's students wanted to re-create the logos they wore, and Bridget reported her students had drawn their motorbike helmet or family car. While Bridget included the contextual study of popular culture production, evidence of connecting her students' reality with tradition became evident when she referred to Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol, whose works today are accepted as fine art, for supportive examples. For the Visual Arts teacher, a balance was sought between visual culture and the traditional modern art curriculum, allowing the two sides of the continuum to co-exist.

A balance between student-centred and teacher-centred approaches to learning was also valued. Meret developed a collection of ideas for ways to encourage students to advance their drawing skills but had to carefully ascertain how to appropriately guide them in their artistic practice. Ideals of the Reggio approach became evident as Meret discovered she was very tentative in the way she gave instructions. Marcel agreed that a teaching rule for him also cautioned against saying too much. The early career teachers were careful to allow space for their students to be creative without being intrusive on their artistic decisions. However, Marcel claimed many of his students were *lazy* and that he had to constantly *pull ideas out from them*. Analysis of this dialogue suggests that instruction to some extent is necessary in order to give students a starting point within their artistic development, especially if they appear to have little motivation or minimal prior knowledge.

Exemplars and Mimicry

In teacher-centred instruction, teachers will often show exemplars to visually assist students' understanding (Andrews, 2003). Although I have since researched that this may not be considered best practice, I do remember spending many off-work hours during my first year of teaching creating the resources I would use to teach my students. In Maggie's *prescribed* curriculum, plenty of exemplars from previous years were provided to visually assist students' comprehension.

Andrews (2003) cautions teachers about providing exemplars because students may mimic them. Exemplars may also inhibit student creativity and prevent permissible variations to occur. To further acknowledge this concern in reference to the contemporary practices of incorporating visual culture into the curriculum, Darts (2004) explains:

...while there is little question that students are regularly immersed in the symbiotic relationships with visual culture, both consuming and constructing meaning from their daily visual encounters, it is also clear that many of these experiences are absorbed and reproduced without adequate critical examination. (p.323)

While following syllabus requirements, Maggie attempted to facilitate the development of students' creative processes when selecting a design to sew onto their calico cushions. But students kept insisting that they just *copy something*. However, through flexible purposing (Dewey, 1934), Maggie manipulated her curriculum to be *more about iconic logos and typography rather than sewing a calico cushion*. As a result, she could justify the copied work because she felt *learning was still taking place*. Although the designs may have been reproductions, there was a stated attempt to critically examine what was being reproduced.

Bridget agreed that learning could still occur through copied work but she had also seen students *get upset* when their work didn't *look like the original*. As a general rule, Marcel was opposed to mimicry. However, he did suggest that inspiration from an already produced idea would be acceptable if it could be *manipulated* into one's own creation. In counterweighing the options, Meret expressed that students *do learn technique from copying* but that there *probably should be a balance* between both original and copied work. Congdon (2005) claims, "A lesson to us as academically trained art educators is that maybe we shouldn't be so ready to stress originality. Perhaps there is power in the copying process, or we should rethink the meaning of the idea" (p.138-149). There appears to be both pros and cons in allowing students to engage in mimicry. Ultimately, it is left to the philosophy of the individual teacher to monitor how much of one approach over the other should be incorporated into the art curriculum.

Controversial Awareness

During her calico cushion activity, Maggie experienced students wanting to copy a design onto their project, and when one of the students wanted to use the Playboy logo, ethical issues surfaced. Zander (2004) affirms that many topics relevant to student life are controversial.

Today's visual culture consistently portrays recognisable symbols such as Playboy while the daily media repeatedly shows figures in provocative poses and states of dress. One of the key issues that arose in the art classrooms of Emery's (2005) research dealt with

representation of the human figure. The teachers in Emery's study found the showing of nude figures to be inappropriate for some but not for all students. In response to a similar discussion, Marcel recognised he was more concerned and careful in the beginning of the year than he was as time progressed. Both Marcel and Bridget agreed in principle that in the right context it would be appropriate to show aspects of nudity in the art curriculum, as long as it refrained from being 'pornographic.' Visual Arts is a subject that naturally pushes boundaries, which makes avoidance of controversial topics almost impossible. Teacher dialogue, tone and influence must be carefully considered in order to maintain an educational perspective when controversial topics are under discussion.

What complicates classroom instruction is when teachers become confused and unsure how to address such controversial topics (Zander, 2004). Maggie stated she had to be very careful with both her dialogue and curriculum and was quite cautious of where the line should be drawn because of child protection laws and cultural diversity. When Maggie first entered teaching she claimed to not realise the extent to which creative subjects were being censored. During her first year of teaching, she formed the impression that anything that *provoked a passionate response was forced underground around the student population to become topics that could not be openly discussed*. It is common for educators to feel as if they must tread lightly around expressions that are unfamiliar, foreign or controversial to certain groups of people (Congdon, Delgado-Trunk & Lopez, 1999). However, Maggie felt that ignoring such topics, including racism and homosexuality, would not benefit her students, and that it would *hamper their intellectual development*. Desai and Chalmers (2007) write, "A world without art needs to be unimaginable – not just because art enhances and decorates – but because we need art for cultural survival and cultural change. And sometimes the art that we need most may be the art that is the most critical" (p.9). Desai and Chalmers, as well as this study, encourage Visual Arts teachers to not shy away from controversial engagement and dialogue but seek to promote honesty, fairness, concern for the welfare of others, empathy and compassion.

Like Maggie, Meret also appeared to feel constricted in conducting open discussion on particular issues. Having attended a Catholic school herself, she related to the sensitivity students held towards the religion. Meret's personal philosophy objected to telling the violent and disturbing religious stories the way they were told to her but at the same time she needed to respect the Catholic system she was teaching in. Particular dispositions or

tendencies in the classroom are often formed by teachers' beliefs and values that guide them (Gradle, 2007). But Zander (2004) argues that teachers must responsibly question whether they have the knowledge, training or right to influence students in their beliefs and that they should aim to share their ideas rather than impose their own thinking on students. Accordingly, Meret attempted to gently provide opportunities for students to voice how they felt and understood alternatives to Catholicism but in the process she discovered she could not force her own beliefs and values onto the students.

When engaging in substantive and communicative dialogue with students, teachers should “conceptualize teaching as needing to meet not only the academic but also the societal and everyday needs of students... [because] there exists a certain obligation to address issues and themes relevant to students' lives” (Zander, 2004:51). When addressing the media-centred Schapelle Corby case, Maggie entered discussion with her class on the following concerns: Why do we hear what we hear? How do we determine what's real? Why is she such a big deal? What does she represent? Why is it important if she's innocent or guilty, or in jail overseas? Creating a social constructivist classroom, Maggie offered opportunity for collaborative discussion where new knowledge could emerge from exploratory conversation. Sawyer (2004a) supports Maggie's effort in stating that good teaching requires teachers to make such connections:

Teachers must explicitly identify connections between the material of the lesson and the knowledge already possessed by the students, and this requires teachers to listen closely and observe their students so that they will know what knowledge they currently possess. Previously covered knowledge must be connected to ongoing discussions, to reinforce both past and new material; when the discussions are improvisational, with no way of knowing what new material will emerge in discussion, a teacher needs a high level of pedagogical content knowledge... to be able to make such connections. (p.199)

The concerns surrounding Schapelle Corby may have been academically relevant to her Community and Family Studies class but discussion on the topic required her and the students to possess prior knowledge in order to have a foundation to build from. Maggie discovered that in entering such dialogue, students needed to *make a reference quickly in order for it to be worth mentioning*. Sawyer (2004a) reminds us that “[t]eachers cannot afford to fail too much time, because students' learning is at stake; they will probably always need to have more structure than improvisational performances” (p.199).

Maggie believed much of her students' prior knowledge was based on those programs they watched on television. She recognised TV shows like *Big Brother*, *Australian Idol* or *The*

Footy Show as pertinent to her students' reality but also admitted she did not hold, nor desire, the same popular culture base. Again, it was an important teaching rule for Maggie to remain distant from her students' friendship group. Had she been interested in similar TV shows, Maggie felt it could be *distracting* to her teaching. Marcel on the other hand, was quite content discussing football with his students because this was something he was interested in as well.

Meret was strongly opposed to the TV show *Big Brother*. She felt *responsible to share an adult perspective* but again, she had to be quite careful in wording her opinion around the student population. Teachers can put themselves at risk by revealing their true feelings. Therefore great care must be taken to protect them in their openness and a conscious shift should be made in how language is approached (Zander, 2004). Teachers at any level in their career need to maintain an adult perspective when addressing controversial subjects with students in order to be conscious of and sensitive to the varying meanings that individual students will create.

It appeared that conversations between the early career teachers and their students aimed to be open in addressing issues and themes relevant to the students' lives. However, the extent of this dialogue was dependent on the teacher's interest in the topic and the time permitted to allow for such discussion to occur.

Politics

Enforced politics have a way of impressing ideas and knowledge, shaping attitudes and developing particular tastes about culture and education on students (Tavin, 2005b, Darts, 2004). According to Tavin (2000b), "all forms of art education are political through commission or omission in the curriculum, through the choice of methods and materials, and for the simple fact that much of art education takes place in institutions that are designed and operated by those in power" (p.112). Maggie recognised *the fingerprints* of the different stakeholders who had their input into the art syllabus. She said it was *clearly a compromise* and felt it was *crucial* for the lessons that she was required to teach to be updated. However, there was often little time or incentive to engage in such tasks. Consequently, she metaphorically described herself as *just a small cog in the system*. For Bridget, much of her curriculum was determined by the syllabus but it was not her only

source. This study's early career teachers developed their lessons through a combination of experience, interest, student input and syllabus guidelines.

Although Bridget eventually felt fortunate to be given the opportunity to teach it, at first the NSW Board of Studies syllabus was confusing for her. Only with the persistence of her university educators did she feel capable of understanding its conceptual framework. According to Andrews (2003), deconstructing syllabus terminology and domain jargon has been considered a difficult challenge for teachers and students. Maggie admitted she perceived the syllabus concepts to be sound but the language intimidating. Perhaps this is why Meret recognised many teachers that she had encountered *haven't even read it*. But for Meret, the syllabus allowed her to feel that what she was teaching was *important*.

In politics, pleasing everyone will always be a challenge. Stakeholders want to ensure students gain an increasing intellectual autonomy in their abilities to aesthetically and persuasively represent ideas in the Visual Arts while understanding and valuing how the field is subject to different interpretations (Board of Studies, 2000). In compliance, the NSW Board of Studies Visual Arts syllabus issues a standards referenced approach that has been considered an effective way for determining student achievement (Andrews, 2003). However, Maggie explains Visual Arts may be one of the few subjects students look forward to and if low marks are received due to syllabus standards, it could really impact student self-esteem. But without a syllabus or standards to achieve, I agree with Bridget that there would be more room for *laziness* on the part of both teachers and students.

Desai and Chalmers (2007) explain that any concern with curriculum is directly related to engagement in political activity. "Schools have always been subject to an overwhelming variety of socio-political demands, which shift in response to the political climate – impacting art education in different ways" (Desai & Chalmers, 2007:6). Since the times of Lanier and McFee during the 60s, the relationship between art education in schools and society at large continues to be revisited. Modern art education needs to move beyond the 'safe' modes of instruction such as those that I practiced in my first year of teaching. In contemporary practice, students should be encouraged to understand the politics of images – the way images circulate across societies and construct meanings about the world while comprehending their aesthetics as relational or dialogic (Desai & Chalmers, 2007). Such

social action projects can reduce apathy and promote a sense of efficacy among youth and therefore needs to be re-conceptualised in these times of testing, standardization and accountability. We need to envision “new models of pedagogy that will keep this contemporary understanding of art practice central to public education and not marginal to the core subjects as it has always been” (Desai & Chalmers, 2007:8).

However, texts such as Kevin Donnelly’s *Dumbing Down* (2007), which voices a strong opinion towards educational policy, can be very contradicting and confusing for Visual Arts teachers who strive to embrace our ever-changing world and effectively teach a relevant and meaningful curriculum. *Dumbing Down* argues for education to maintain a conservative humanist approach that discourages students to think independently. Donnelly discourages change in redefining what should be considered politically correct and warns against the “tyranny of relevance where education is restricted to what is local, contemporary and immediately relevant” (p.11). Obviously, my political positioning towards Visual Arts education and the aims of Visual Arts teachers are opposed to this. Whether Donnelly can accept it or not, change is a factor of life. Students are intelligent human beings that need teachers to encourage and appropriately guide them in constructively developing their individuality within the reality and relevance of our constantly evolving environment.

Identity Transitions (Theme 4)

Within their evolving environment, the early career teachers in this study took on new meanings and developed new identities. They refined their understandings of education and processes of producing art as they were no longer students but teachers of the subject (Stanley, 2006).

Outlining the Participants’ Teacher Identities

Personal sacrifices and changes in professional status made a significant impact on the well being of the early career teachers involved in this study. There were some lows and great highs but overall a sense of growing confidence was identified (Bullough & Young, 2002). Research has indicated that achieving this confidence and settling into a productive teacher identity is extremely difficult for beginning teachers because their first year tends to be a period of great anxiety (Farrell, 2003)

For example, Bridget gained confidence living on her own. However, she missed her life in Sydney and encountered difficulty adjusting to her new environment. Only with the support of co-workers, friends and family and not until the end of Term 4, could Bridget settle down and feel at home in the outback town of Hay. Within the small community, an unwritten rule of the profession required her to ascertain a suitable persona, a new teacher identity that would not always permit her the luxury of just being herself. There was no avoiding students and their parents wherever she went so the young teacher had to quickly learn to keep questionable behaviour within reason in order to maintain her 'respectable' teacher image. Similarly, Maggie developed her *best face* for the local public eye. She claimed that this *energised* her but that such changes to her personal style also had her *feeling old*. Maggie's cycles and rhythms felt chaotic. She had no place to relax and patience with her daughter diminished. By the end of the year, both Bridget and Maggie learned that they needed to balance their new career with something they did just for themselves. Fisher (2000) discusses the importance of teachers finding coping mechanisms to deal with the stressors of the profession. One way for teachers to deal with such stress is to explore strategies for achieving balance between their personal and professional lives. To do this effectively, teachers need to understand their priorities and then stick to them (Fisher, 2000).

Given common stereotypes and misconceptions, a particular priority for Marcel was to conceal his sexuality from students and staff. Although this concealment may have been imperative in keeping his position, he still experienced many personal rewards. Marcel began to recognise that perhaps his life wasn't so bad after comparing it to the hardships some of his students endured. Similarly, once Maggie understood what a low priority school was for some of her students and what an effort it was just for them to be there, it was rewarding for her to feel as if maybe she had influenced them to think more positively about school than they might have otherwise.

While casual teaching at Sansibar College, Meret's personal philosophy supported a feminine perspective. But she felt the all-boys school she often worked for didn't necessarily encourage this. Meret concluded that she needed to work in a school that would support her. Her teacher identity benefited from taking the time to find such a teaching position. Again we see how crucial support is for early career teachers. Although Meret could not establish a routine as a casual teacher and felt she had little to no control

over the curriculum she taught, she eventually realised she could be more of a teacher in the classroom than she had previously thought. Meret learned that even as a casual teacher, there was still the opportunity to be an ‘effective’ teacher and do something *amazing*.

Bain (2004) defines highly qualified teachers as being people with a bachelor’s degree who have earned their qualifications to teach. But are ‘quality’ teachers necessarily ‘effective’ teachers as well? Bain (2004) explains that ‘effective’ teachers not only have a certificate indicating that they have mastered the content knowledge in their field, but they also possess something more intangible. They understand the cultural climate in their classrooms, can interpret and decode student language and they recognise where their students are coming from in terms of their interests, beliefs, backgrounds and social relationships. In light of such a definition, this study shows the participants are both ‘effective’ and high in ‘quality’ as their teacher identities emerge.

In the role of effective teaching, we are motivated to experience “something yet unknown in our teaching selves; whether this is a greater capacity for reflection, a shift in our viewpoint of the learner, or an adaptability in approaches” (Gradle, 2007:7). In artmaking, the unknown is eventually given form and becomes the visible proof of growth and process. Just as in making art, the first year of teaching may begin with a feeling of uncertainty. The necessary motivation that moves artists beyond the blank canvas is critical for success. To grow effectively as teachers, we learn our processes require exploration, flexibility and acceptance that many ideas will need to be generated (Gradle, 2007).

Outlining the Participants’ Artistic Identities

All participants in this study internalised a childhood artist identity that became a part of the foundation for their professional lives (Hatfield, et al., 2006). Most of my younger years focused on music but when I didn’t want to be pressured into performance, I easily crossed over into the Visual Arts. However, this later interest in Visual Arts, which did not occur until after high school, may have also been the reason I received such little education towards the basics of art theory. Through exploration, flexibility and acceptance, a great deal of learning occurred in relation to art during my first year of teaching. My artistic abilities consistently developed through teaching others.

Similar to the other early career artist-teachers in this study, I found validation in my artistic identity through the reaction of my students. The data revealed that all five of us simultaneously validated our artist and professional identities by bringing our artistic identities into the classroom setting (Hatfield, et al., 2006). Whether we were actively developing our techniques, exploring new mediums, decorating bulletin boards, sharing our personal portfolios, sketching, painting or sewing in front of the class, the reactions from our students appeared to have a profound effect. As artist-teachers, our confidence grew when we felt students could understand what we were teaching and trust our artistic ability. TAEV (2006) states that effective and high quality Visual Arts teachers should possess a developed understanding of arts practice and be capable of motivating students to want to make art. Stimulating student interest with our personal visual references has been perceived as a beneficial means for affirming our artistic ability while creating inspiration within the art room.

While teaching did constitute steady employment, it also resulted in taking priority over personal artistic creation for Marcel, Maggie and me. Teaching became our art for much of our artistic identity was associated with our new careers. *Rather than it being all about me, this is what I made, look at me*, Maggie stated she could see her art reflected back to her through her students. As for Bridget and Meret, changes to their personal lifestyle allowed their artistic identities to flourish during this first year of teaching. With more space, less distractions and without the pressure of a theory-based approach that was often required in her schooling, Bridget began to create art for purposes of pure enjoyment. From circular designs to flowers and jewelry, she spent the year exploring a wide range of subject matter that she could eventually incorporate into her curriculum.

Meret enrolled in a Steiner course so that she would become employable at a desirable institution located near Sydney. This course allowed her to consider technique more than she had in the past for she learned to paint without any form or lines while engaging in a cerebral experience. Throughout the year, Meret's artistic practice took an analytical turn as she contemplated the processes and ways to teach what she was doing. As stated in the literature review, those who consider themselves constructivists would emphasise the process of artmaking, placing importance on creativity and the continuous reconstruction of conceptual and rational schema (Haynes, 2004). Meret felt she could more accessibly align with the educational philosophies of institutions such as Caroline Basle where the

Steiner approach was emphasised and reasons for one's acting was viewed with higher regard rather than the outcomes achieved.

The formation of any professional identity develops with experience, and as such the identity development of the artist-teacher is no different (Hatfield, et al., 2006). The five of us involved in this study may have found validation of our artist identity in the classroom setting but the balance between our artist and teacher roles varied amongst us. I felt rather unprepared after university but adjusted with experience and eventually identified with being an artist-teacher. During her first year of teaching, Maggie allowed her teacher role to overtake her artist role because she had little energy or time to engage in personal artmaking. Bridget and Meret successfully integrated both their artist and teacher identities into one. Marcel attempted to balance both roles as artist and as teacher by separating and pursuing them at different times and in different spaces.

Is Teaching a Form of Art?

All five of us believed it important for Visual Arts teachers to be practicing artists. There was also a unanimous agreement that the act of teaching was indeed a form of art. Meret considered teaching *the ultimate creative act* for it *expanded her consciousness* and *forced her to find a means for connecting with students*. She described her exigency to improvise instantaneously as *performance art* and that teaching was *very theatrical* because she felt as if she was on a stage when she addressed the class. Referring to the instant feedback she received from her audience, Meret metaphorically described students as *raw media* and that they were her *live sculptures*. Similarly, Maggie also stated her artistic life now revolved around performance and that she dressed up and wore a smile for it. Many more metaphors surfaced in the data when Maggie began describing teaching as *weaving something out of nothing*, playing the role of *Mary Poppins* and constantly being an *entertainer*.

Sawyer (2004b) has stated that teaching is often conceptualized as creative performance and that such comparisons were originally intended to emphasise teacher creativity. However, Sawyer explains that this link between teaching and performance has instead become associated with contemporary reform efforts that actually deny the creativity of teachers:

Scripted instruction is opposed to constructivist, inquiry-based, and dialogic teaching methods that emphasize classroom collaboration. To provide insight into these methods, the 'teaching as performance' metaphor must be modified: Teaching is improvisational performance. (Sawyer, 2004b:12)

In Sawyer's view, constructivist teaching and effective classroom discussion is fundamentally improvisational. Labeling teaching as 'performance' suggests that teacher dialogue is scripted and overly directed, which would result in students being unable to co-construct their own knowledge (Sawyer, 2004a). Conversely, teaching viewed as 'improvisational performance' suggests flexibility and spontaneity where classroom dynamics emerge from the unscripted interactions between students and teacher. Teachers who engage such social skills can shift from a teacher-centred style to a more student-centred facilitative style where both the teacher and students become inclined to ask higher-order questions (Sawyer, 2004a). The participants of this study appeared to feel comfortable comparing their actions in the classroom to performance but what Sawyer (2004b) argues is that they view teaching as improvisational performance rather than creative performance for two reasons. First, the creative performance metaphor tends to suggest a planned perspective with the teacher performing from a script. Second, it suggests a focus on the teacher rather than the entire class. In contrast, the flow of true classroom discussions emerges from both teacher and students leaving the outcome unpredictable, just as in theatre improvisations. Again we see how an apparent, yet perhaps minute, diversity in the terminologies (Cole and Knowles, 2001a) can make a substantial difference to how such concepts will be perceived.

Although the participants agreed that the act of teaching could be considered a form of art, they also believed not all teachers were artists (Stanley, 2007). Maggie described art as *an intellectual pursuit* and that teachers should be *smart*. However, according to Maggie, not all teachers possessed this intellect. Marcel claimed *lazy teachers* who were *just working for the pay* should not be considered as artists in the classroom. The participants agreed that there needed to be *passion* in the teachers' efforts and *enjoyment* towards their work if it is to be considered artistic.

The purpose of education should be to inspire ideas that form new visions, values and practices (Eisner, 2002; Dewey 1909). However, while many current policy makers are preoccupied with boosting test scores, the ways in which creative teaching can contribute

to both the enrichment of life and the development of mind often goes unnoticed (Eisner, 2005). Maggie interestingly referred to the curriculum that had been allocated to her. Her syllabus outlined what the students learnt ‘to do’ and what they learnt ‘about.’ However, what was missing in her standardised curriculum was a section explaining ‘why’ she should implement the intended subject matter. Maggie clarified that only certain teachers would willingly incorporate the ‘why’ concept into their lessons. Perhaps Maggie was proposing that those particular teachers would be considered more ‘artistic’ in their methods.

Dewey (1909) suggested that how teachers rank as artists could be determined by their ability to foster the attitude of the artist in those they teach. Some teachers may be successful at arousing enthusiasm or communicating large ideas. Other teachers may be successful in teaching technique. Like that of a painter, the success of teachers lies in their students’ ability to pay attention to the detail that enables mastery over means of execution (Eisner, 2003). Teaching embraces an artistic skill to appropriately address the substantial diversity in students’ experiences. When implementing instruction, politics, culture, languages, learning styles and abilities may become of critical concern (Emery, 2002). Evaluating student strengths, styles and needs while creating effective representations of subject matter knowledge (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996) are also of concern. A useful metaphor described by Bridget signified teaching as *the art of being versatile*.

Through the stories of our experiences, insight is gained into personal reasons why artists become teachers. The locations of such experiences, the experiences of our worlds and the place of art in the development of our artistic and teacher selves profoundly influenced our thinking and being. Who we became as teachers and artists was the totality of prior experiences and the meanings we had derived from them, coupled with the visions we held for our futures and the environments in which such experiences took place. In relation to Dewey and Eisner’s view that teachers are artists, the act of ‘doing art’ became part of our everyday experience. Whether we were preparing a lesson plan or sketching in our journal, we were engaged in an artistic endeavour. Despite how others may define us, we saw ourselves as artists, and artists ‘do art’ (Finley & Knowles, 1995).

Advice for the Future

Definitions of ‘art’ tend to be limited to fit one’s own background and interests. But by limiting our definitions, we shut out opportunity for change (Hicks, 2004). Hicks (2004) states, “We have not taken advantage of connections between art and society and we have not perceived how those connections have increased dramatically during the last four decades” (p.16). I define the act of teaching as a form of art and I define this thesis as a form of art in the same way that I consider my playing of the piano or my collages to be forms of art. These artistic endeavours are related to society by reason of their origin. Gaultier (1913) writes: “There is no work of art, however particular, original, or solitary it may be, which does not reflect its society, period, and country in various ways” (p.157).

So what can our westernised society learn from our artistic endeavours as related to teaching? In their final interviews I asked my participants to share their knowledge regarding their first year experiences as if advising a class of future teachers to what lay ahead. This is what they had to say...

As a result of her personal growth, Meret suggested early career teachers have *tricks up their sleeve* that could instantly grab students’ attention. And speaking from firsthand experience, she also recommended they discriminate between whose advice they choose to listen to. Consciously seeking *role modeling*, Meret observed and watched a particular teacher at Sansibar College who insisted on respect and commanded authority but in a compassionate manner. Meret was inspired by her integrity. Compliance was this teacher’s starting point rather than endpoint. Then came learning and teaching.

After a year’s experience, Bridget’s advice to future teachers would be to keep an open mind - be flexible and adapt to the situation rather than force predetermined expectations. *Things aren’t always what you expect... ultimately it will just be what you decide to make of it.*

Maggie encouraged future teachers to *really think hard* about their decision to become a teacher. *If the uni student believes he’s going to be Mr. Chips of Visual Arts, he would be one of the fortunate few.* Her advice was to *take it fairly easy, in a personal sense.* She recognised new teachers as trying to be everything to all people. Maggie recommended that new teachers *go with the flow.* It is necessary to be intuitive, perceptive and trusting,

but also to be decisive in working out what is most important. Safety, caring, some meaningful work and fair assessment were viewed by Maggie as important.

Suggesting a different approach, Marcel advised that first year teachers become involved in the school environment as much as possible, regardless of how tired and worn out they become. By taking on extra responsibility, Marcel proved himself interested and wanting to be at the school which in turn supported his candidature when reapplying for his position at the end of the year. Although Maggie did not advise this strategy to future teachers, she was not opposed to this approach for she had at one point stated herself, *I want to do as much as I can to build my CV and gain experience*. She recognised this as significant for she was also employed in a non-permanent position.

I, too, became greatly involved in the school where I wanted to reapply in order to keep my position and perceived Marcel's advice as truly beneficial. In actuality, I am in agreement with the constructive advice of each of my participants. As I did not write this thesis immediately following my first year of teaching, I cannot go back in time and place myself in their same position. However, what I can do is reflect now on what I have learnt about early career teaching since the time that I was a first year teacher myself.

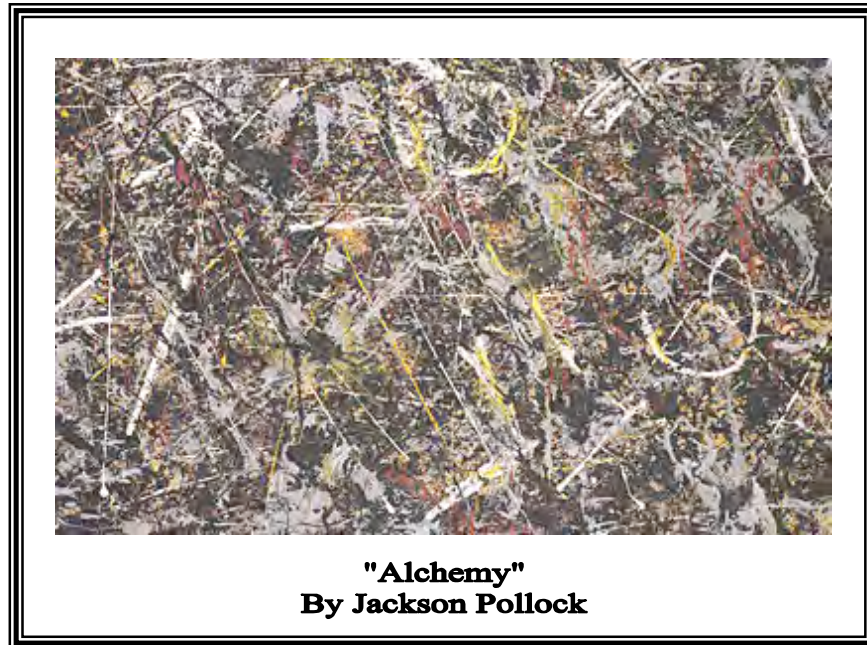
In the early stages of developing my collaging skills, I skimmed National Geographic magazines using X-acto knives to cut out any image that appealed to me. The more I cut, the more I learned how to do it better. The grain of the paper, the angle of my wrist, the deduction of paper strength, the sharpness of the blade - these were just some of the variables that would make my cutting better or worse. The details to collaging could not be foreseen until I became involved in the actual pursuit of developing my art. I use this process to metaphorically describe my early career transitions in teaching. Prior to entering the profession, I could not foresee all the responsibility teaching would entail or the behaviours that some of the students would present. I could only recognise these variables once familiarity was achieved. Simply stated, the more I taught, the more I learnt to do it better. I maintained confidence that through reflection and self-motivation each year would improve with experience. I nurtured a consistent resiliency towards the most difficult times, and eventually I developed my art and benefited from the results I achieved. The transitions of the early career artist-teacher participants recruited for this study appear to

have also traveled similar journeys - growing with each day's experience to become the teachers they aspired to be.

This chapter created a map of our experiences. The transitional challenges we encountered as early career teachers moved well beyond the school context and the teacher-student relationships that were identified by Furlong and Maynard's (1995) stages of transition. Both our organisational and personal environments made a considerable impact on the shaping of our new identities as artist-teachers. The details of our stories were different yet they all encouraged reflecting on experience and sharing that experience to create better understandings (Cortazzi, 1993). For reasons both theoretical and practical and to learn about ways of seeing and thinking in Visual Arts education, it became necessary to understand teachers' stories.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Drawing Conclusions



“His technique may seem odd, but its results have stood the test of time,” so wrote Richard Taylor (1998) of Jackson Pollock’s work. The patterns in the artwork featured above reflect Pollock’s gestures as he swung his paint trajectories around and across a once blank canvas. Many variables including the pendulum’s height, angle and speed recorded this two-dimensional image of the artist’s three-dimensional movement. Pollock worked and reworked his canvas for weeks at a time, building up an increasingly dense web of patterns until finally he decided the composition was complete.

In this study, my gestures often swung between perspectives. I focused in on particular aspects and then focused out to gain a comprehensive view. I worked quickly and I worked slowly. I stepped outside the norm and then I stepped back in. Meanwhile, four years passed – the same amount of time I spent in the classroom as a Visual Arts teacher before leaving to pursue a research path. “So, where to now?” I ask myself as I reach this final chapter.

In an attempt to answer this question, what becomes most apparent is that there actually is no end. *The End* is just a metaphor to signify a beginning for something else. This study

marks a beginning of change for future teachers, specifically those who will teach Visual Arts, by informing, creating understanding and possibly providing comfort in regards to the transitional challenges involved in entering such a demanding career. Ultimately, this change aims to increase retention rates amongst early career teachers.

Pollock's composition has remained relevant long past the time of its creation. Its story has left an imprint on society that continues to recreate the social and cultural milieu of its time. Through the story of my research, readers are able to gain some insight into the personal reasons why five artists have become teachers and are provided with an understanding as to how much responsibility such a decision entails. Who we become as teachers and artists is a collage of prior experiences and the meanings we have derived from them, coupled with the visions we hold for our futures. The location of our experiences, the experience of our worlds and the place of art within our stories has been recorded and is now available to leave its own imprint of our time.

Like the interpretation of any artwork, the meanings readers will bring to this text and the meanings I gave to the artist-teachers' experiences can only be subjective. This study is limited in that it had to rely on participants' responses and that it presented my restricted perspective. Our experiences can not be generalised to all early career artist-teachers. Due to the unique circumstances of an individual's life experiences, compounded with their teacher education and the particular culture of the school where he or she is employed, each person's journey is destined to be different. Only with active engagement can one fully recognise his or her own perspective on what it means to be an artist-teacher. There are no absolute truths, rather multiple truths that are individually constructed. This work is limited to my subjective perspective and as such stands as one piece of constructed truth and understanding. Many other interpretations will always be possible.

However, there is still much to be learnt from this research. Teaching may constitute steady employment but it is a demanding profession and loses many commendable individuals very early in their careers. This study outlines several challenges that may contribute to this attrition, then offers suggestions for future teachers to consider in an effort to ease the transition from preservice to inservice.

Overwhelming workloads, student discipline and difficulties in negotiating a productive and fitting teaching identity are just some aspects that may diminish the altruistic, nurturing and interpersonal attitude of idealistic early career teachers. It becomes a joint effort between policy makers, institutions of teacher education, employing authorities, the schools and the individual to implement possible solutions. Effective support systems have been viewed as a necessary solution in helping retain early career teachers in the profession. Novice teachers will also need to engage in reflective practice but will often require guidance in doing this productively. The suggestion of a reduced teaching load for first year teachers may ease transitions while providing time for such reflective activity. The participants within the study responded positively to the reflective practice of the interviewing process. Perhaps the opportunity to engage in reflection contributed in some way to their unanimous decision to remain in the teaching profession?

The theory and the narrative accounts presented in this text support the concept that the formation of an artist-teacher identity is a unique process for each individual. This process involves the examination and transformation (which is often accomplished through reflection) of existing knowledge and the adaptation of such knowledge, skills and attitudes to practice. All teachers have to acquire a variety of teaching strategies, learn different ways of creating safe and equitable classroom environments and learn to respond to the needs of diverse groups of students while engaging them in relevant curriculum content. Within the structure provided by their existing knowledge and self-directed inquiries, teachers build their competence and self-confidence (Beattie, 2000).

This study serves to make the transitional processes to teaching explicit, shared and supported, thus giving individuals conscious control. Because our environment is constantly changing, it is imperative for teachers to accept an active role in professional development, keep informed about contemporary pedagogies and transcend the limits of their own knowing, cultures and life experiences in order to remain competent in their field (Beattie, 2000). While conducting this research and writing this thesis, I have transcended the boundaries of my personal culture (thus my knowing and my life experiences) as a result of moving overseas; but I also continued to teach. Teaching is my art now. While living in Australia the past four years, I have been teaching university courses. I have also been teaching in a public school and I have been teaching piano in my private studio setting. Like my participants, I am not only an artist who lives life as a

teacher but as a teacher I am also an artist. This research illustrates how four other teachers also maintained their identities as versatile artists in the classroom by drawing from their passion and willingness to constantly grow.

There is certainly an art to being an effective teacher. To become a highly qualified *and* an effective teacher, one must gain the accreditation to teach but also understand the cultural climate in the school, interpret student language and be able to recognise students' interests, beliefs, backgrounds and social relationships (Bain, 2004). Visual Arts teachers need to encourage students to understand the politics of images and comprehend their aesthetics while they engage them in dialogue and production that promotes honesty, fairness, concern for the welfare of others, empathy and compassion. Lesson development and production should relate to the cultural reality and generation of the students yet stay respectful to syllabus guidelines. While addressing issues and themes relevant to students' lives, teachers also need to remain sensitive to the varying meanings that individual students will create. There is artistic skill involved to develop ideas, teach a curriculum that is well-proportioned and be responsive to the diversity of students' needs. Sensibility, imagination, technique and the ability to make significant judgments are required for the success of an artist (Eisner, 2002).

According to Greene (1995), a work of art is “an object of delight, a vehicle of communication, and at least potentially, a record of significant insight” (p.vii). By allowing ourselves to be viewed as artists in the classroom, we sustain a passion for education and find ‘delight’ in knowing we are in some way communicating something of significance. Such ‘rewards’ provide us with the resiliency required to get through the most difficult times.

In light of Green's definition, this research should also be viewed as a work of art. The metaphors and the benefits achieved through the process of creatively writing this thesis and collaging the visual imagery to represent the qualitative data helped me, as the artist-researcher, gain further insight and a deeper understanding towards my project. I discovered that artful methods reveal hidden meanings, expand current understandings, visually enhance our knowledge base and create existential interpretations. Writing this

thesis became “a way of ‘knowing’ – a method of discovery and analysis” (Richardson, 2000:923) for me.

Pollock’s paintings may have started as blank canvases but with imagination, layers upon layers of exploration, flexibility and acceptance, change became visible. Today, his paintings provide us with something to talk about. Art and communication is needed for cultural survival and cultural change (Desai & Chalmers, 2007). Similarly, this study sought underlying connections that could be used effectively to change future approaches to teaching and educational research by using multiple forms of communication in order to promote understanding.

For obvious reasons (mainly time and space), not every challenge to Visual Arts education nor every issue concerning the artist-teachers’ identity development could be explored within the confines of this study. Future research will need to further probe the plethora of issues concerning early career Visual Arts teachers. For example, Visual Arts teachers are often inclined to implement lessons that embed cultural diversity, but they often do so without accurate or sufficient information (Congdon, et al., 1999). Research in this area could demonstrate how teachers should allow students to recognise they are both similar, yet different from the culture they are studying while encouraging intercultural understanding, respect and appreciation (Irwin, Rogers & Wan, 1999). Other topics of critical concern to contemporary artists include religion, racism, gender and sexuality, oppression and war, government, environmental awareness and technology. While modern Visual Arts teachers are being encouraged to move beyond ‘safe’ modes of instruction, discussion into controversial areas and how our artist-teacher identity contributes to the knowledge construction of our students could be unpacked and thoroughly explored.

However, what is more pressing according to Australian Education Union federal president Pat Byrne, is the “growing consensus from educators around the world that a focus on standardised testing leads to 'teaching to the test', a narrowing of the curriculum to concentrate on what is tested and 'unprofessional treatment' of teachers through the increased use of direct instruction methods” (in Packer, 2007: ¶11). Winner and Hetland, (2007) are especially concerned for the United States where public school systems continue to cut back art programs. The researchers claim such high-stakes exams almost

exclusively focus on verbal and quantitative skills and reward only those children who have ‘a knack for absorbing and regurgitating’ information.

As schools increasingly shape their classes to produce high test scores, many life skills not measured by tests just don’t get taught. It seems plausible to imagine art classes might help fill the gap by encouraging different kinds of thinking, but there has been remarkably little careful study of what skills and modes of thinking the arts actually teach. (Winner & Hetland, 2007:1)

What skills and modes of thinking do the arts teach that differ from other academic subjects? Why is it imperative that the arts retain a core role in our educational systems? Future studies could address these concerns and contribute to the on-going dialogue regarding curriculum development. Additionally, I am also interested in the types of results that effective mentoring, reduced teaching loads and reflective practice will have on the attrition rates of early career teachers over time as such concepts become more integrated into induction programs. How will novice teachers react to such induction? What new issues and concerns will arise from the implementation of these programs? Will attrition rates significantly diminish?

Being the researcher searching for answers while playing the role of the researched, challenged me to detach and write with a balanced perspective. However, an advantage to maintaining an ‘outsider’ perspective was that I came into this ‘insider’ role (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993) from a different cultural context. The conclusions I draw are related to both American and Australian westernised school systems and may well be international issues concerning early career artist-teachers in many countries.

Addressing Visual Arts education from a global perspective, Kerry Freedman (2005b), then Senior Editor of *Studies in Art Education* wrote:

The research community is a critical part of the profession of art education, although it seems to play a quiet role in its support of the field and as a catalyst for change in policy and practice... The research community in art education is becoming an increasingly vital force in the field in terms of both size and influence. Internationally, the research community has grown considerably in the past decade... However, another type of growth is important to the field. It involves the growth of connections between and among researchers outside major institutionalized structures. (p.195)

This study encourages the incorporation of artful methods in future projects to help research become more accessible and inviting to the wider community outside the institution. Arts-informed inquiry will continue to create bridges between institutions and the public domain. Theory may inform practice but it is also developed as a result of

practice (Freedman, 2004). It is the relationship between the two that promotes the critical dialogue between the public and research communities. In an additional attempt to create such bridges, I held a solo art exhibition in a public space during November 2007 to feature the collages of this thesis alongside their corresponding data and theoretical underpinnings (artefacts located in Appendix K).

Connections between theory and practice have been made throughout this study. Improvements for the Visual Arts curriculum have been addressed while instruction that promotes student learning of contemporary life concepts and skills has been supported (Freedman, 2005a). The relationship of interests between students and teachers and how the two must work together when contributing to the construction of knowledge presented a major issue. Attention was given to identity formation and perceptions of effective teaching were offered. The differences in knowledge sets amongst students, teachers, researchers and policy makers were also highlighted.

Since the debates between Plato and Aristotle, people have held firm and often very different convictions about what constitutes art knowledge (Freedman, 2005c). According to Freedman (2005c), “It has often been suggested that experts agree less about art than any other field of study (p.100). But in Aristotelian fashion, the growth of knowledge through the encouragement of imagination is important. Coming to know about art includes knowing something about ourselves and the ways in which we approach open-ended knowledge. Imagination is the source of invention, novelty and flexibility that can greatly enrich scientific rational thinking. For with its use, one can visualise the possible, not just the actual. After all, “the practice of science is itself an art pervaded by passion, dependent upon imagination, filled with uncertainty, and often motivated by the challenge and the joy of the journey” (Eisner, 2002:379).

To enrich our rational thinking, Josselson (2006) explains that “what we seek in narrative research is some understanding of the patterns that cohere among individuals and the aspects of lived experience that differentiate” (p.5). Thus, it is understandable why Furlong and Maynard (1995) categorise experiences into stages of transition and Connelly and Clandinin (1988) use the ideas of image, rules, principles, personal philosophy, metaphor, cycles, rhythms and narrative unities to illustrate the narrative process. With reference to a

template, the undulations of lived experience and psychosocial realities may resonate within thematic structures. But none of our conclusions will ever be certain when applied to the realm of people. Therefore, “[w]e can perhaps best know a field of scholarship when we can engage those areas of tension where multiple facets of understanding intersect, interweave, collide, contradict and show themselves in their shifting and often paradoxical relation to each other” (Josselson, 2006:10). When studying narratives, it is necessary to gain some understanding of the interpretive status of similar groups of people already present in literature. Josselson (2006) argues that a problem facing narrative researchers is that there is not enough integration of our findings across each other’s research. In reference to this concern, this study purposefully sought to discuss and integrate several related narratives already present in the research literature. For example, the narratives of Larry and Nancy (Bullough, et al., 1991) as described in Chapter 3 supported the consistencies in negotiating a productive and fitting teaching identity as shown in my own and the participants’ narratives. By drawing conclusions from multiple narratives regarding similar issues, we build a knowledge base. More of this integration in future studies would continue to be of value.

Several early career teacher narratives have described uncertainty, frustration and disappointment on entering the profession. For many prospective teachers, it takes time, trusting relationships and experiences of collaboration to understand the benefits of learning from and with others (Beattie, 2000). It is possible to inform and prepare novice teachers for the transitions they may encounter. They can be made aware of possible challenges, taught to recognise that idealised beliefs might be traded in for more realistic representations and encouraged to develop resiliency. Ultimately, if early career teachers can learn to adapt and become flexible through difficult times and utilise support programs that may be available, satisfaction can be achieved and the potential for attrition might be reduced.

Inspired by Barone’s (2001:7) words, nothing would satisfy me more than if this thesis led to richer discussions about the ultimate purposes and meaning of Visual Arts education, of what can and should be accomplished in schools that might make a positive difference in the future lives of early career teachers and of how that might be done. Our stories are only the beginning to that which can affect eternity.

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Appendixes

APPENDIX A Analysis Tables

In *The Beginning* of this thesis, several questions were raised regarding the transitions qualified Visual Arts teachers experience during the year following completion of a preservice teacher education program. Although the in-depth meaning to our experiences is found within the reading (Richardson, 2000), I provide summative tables to offer the reader quick and accessible answers to my research questions. The information provided within these tables is derived from the self-narrative in Chapter 2 and the novelette presented in Chapter 6. As a defining element of arts-informed inquiry, this choice and articulation of form reflects my intention to reach audiences beyond the academy (Cole & Knowles, 2008) for intense reading is not required. However, such categorisations are blurred and represent only my interpretation so can never be definitive.

These tables filter the thematic categories through Furlong and Maynard's (1995) stages of transition and Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) descriptions of image, rules, principles and personal philosophy, metaphor, cycles and rhythms and narrative unity. Some sections in these tables are occasionally left blank because data was not always reported from each participant on every topic.

Table 1: Why did the artists become teachers?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Meret	Denise
(Prior) Image	•Visual Arts student	•Graphic design artist	•Chef	•Avant-garde performer •Freelance garden designer	•Music and Visual Arts student
Rules, Principles & Personal Philosophy		•Graphic design world requires ego & ambition	•Need to know the 'right people' for success in art •Galleries control art production		•Need to know the 'right people' for success in art
Cycles & Rhythm	•Continue to do something art related	•Priorities changed when becoming wife & mother	•Followed his heart •Wanted to maintain artistic freedom	•Continue to do something art related	•Continue to do something art related
Narrative Unity	•Teaching was first career •Desired financial security	•Changed career	•Changed career	•Changed career	•Teaching was first career •Desired financial security with pension
Stage: Early Idealism	•Do something art related	•Skills benefit community in positive ways	•Holidays provide time •Work with children •Change a life	•Develop rapport with children •Share something 'real' •Learn about communication •Makes her feel 'alive'	•Do something art related •Holidays provide time •Be a positive influence towards students
Notable Transitions	•Bought a new car	•'Confluence of factors' caused her to reconsider profession •Lifestyle changed as a result of the pay	•'Societal attitudes' kept him from teaching until he could enroll as mature-aged student to earn qualifications •Could make purchases at free will	•'Negative attitudes' detoured her from teaching - later realised teaching would call upon her maturity and help her communicate •Felt recognised with pay •Began paying off student loans	

Table 2: What were the participants' attitudes towards their teacher education program?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Meret	Denise
Rules, Principles & Personal Philosophy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Course was too theoretical •Uni teachers need recent high school teaching experience •Theory is difficult to comprehend until applied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Felt time was wasted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course built on presumed level of knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Felt I could do better at teaching than some teachers who taught me
Narrative Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •18 weeks prac experience •Prepared to teach syllabus •Wanted to be taught strategies for practical daily thinking •Wanted support with job applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •18 weeks prac experience •Prepared to teach syllabus •Desired more prac 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •8 weeks prac experience •Desired more prac •Desired support with seeking employment •Wanted to know how to talk to parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •18 weeks prac experience •Course taught hidden curriculum, self-reflection, to teach from heart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •37 weeks prac experience •Made friends and developed rapport with those in teaching profession •Developed some resentments towards my own education
Metaphor			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •He was just a number 		
Notable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Overall satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Wished she was still at uni 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Overall disappointed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Realised teaching will get easier with time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Discovered many gaps in knowledge

Table 3: What were the participants' experiences in seeking employment?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Meret	Denise
Narrative Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Offered permanent Visual Arts position in outback town 6 weeks prior to school start 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Offered permanent mobile position in D&T 3 months prior to school start 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Offered 1 year contract Visual Arts position in Melbourne 2 weeks prior to school start 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Never offered full-time position •Casual Taught •Continued garden design •Taught at Coaching College •Taught at Merelein •Enrolled in Steiner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Offered 6-month contract teaching Computer Graphics and Data Processing 3 days after start of school
Notable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Received several rejections before receiving offer •Moved to country to receive desired position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •All classes changed to Science in last month of school year •Offered Visual Arts classes for following year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Received several rejections before receiving offer •Had to reapply for position at end of year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Received several rejections •Offered minimum 1 day a week at 'dream' job at end of year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Changed schools mid-year to Visual Arts position •Had to reapply for position at end of year

Table 4: Were the participants required to teach outside their field of expertise?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Denise
Narrative Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes •Taught Life Skills, Seniors & English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes •Taught Textiles, Community & Family Studies, Touch Football & Netball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes •Taught Textiles & Pastoral Care/Sex Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes •Taught Data Processing

Table 5: What transitional challenges did the early career teachers experience?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Meret	Denise
Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Close to students' age •Only Visual Arts teacher on campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Popular teacher •Needed to be two different people •Students didn't see her as a person, rather she was the subject 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Strongly identified with students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lacked natural authority due to being a casual teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Close to students' age
Rules, Principles & Personal Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Build relationships with students •Must be <i>on</i> at all times •Do not sympathise with students •There is more than one way to deal with an issue •Screaming only escalates tension •Students feel comfortable around teacher when they discover commonalities •Get to know students and be approachable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Build relationships with students •Must be <i>on</i> at all times •Do not be too friendly with students •Maintain control •Teachers need to be good listeners and readers of character •Teachers should understand student motivations •Yelling is not good role modeling •Writing a report was not the best way to deal with disruptive behaviour •Taking away students' mobile technology would cause a fight and was impossible to police •Extra responsibility created opportunity •Talking on a personal level with students makes you more human 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Build relationships with students •Never let your guard down •Keep work out of personal life •Be strict at start of year •Writing a report was not the best way to deal with disruptive behaviour •Students' mobile technology is too expensive to take away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Build relationships with students •Quickly learn student names •Screaming does not feel good •Use students' mobile technology as a discipline tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Build relationships with students •Students like teachers to share personal stories
Metaphor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Experience was like the death of a thousand cuts •Did not want to be Darth Vader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Don't smile until Easter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •So depleted she couldn't even stand 	
Cycles & Rhythms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Exhausted by full-time job routine everyday •Learning everyday 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Little time and energy for personal life •Mobile technology caused constant discipline issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Physically exhausted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Used school management system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Little time and energy for personal life •Consistently enforced conservation
Narrative Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Had own classroom •\$3,000 supply budget •Had not previously considered ordering supplies •Spent a weekend cleaning out previous teacher's stuff •Students appeared to prefer her over previous teacher •Difficult to implement 'No Swearing' policy when it was not supported in homes •Difficulties drawing on vertical surface •Had only a chalkboard •Did not know how to work the kiln •Additional responsibilities included first year work group, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could not build environment in shared classroom •Had no control over supplies •Found kitchen classroom appalling •Most difficult was dealing with student behaviour •Previous teacher returned and demanded her classes back •Students had poor literary skills •Additional responsibilities included coaching touch football and netball, marking the ELLA papers, involved in a garden/mural project, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Frustrated with running between shared classrooms •\$6,000 supply budget •Surprised by supply ordering process •Requested to provide art materials to other teachers •Flexible in accommodating side projects •Most difficult was dealing with student behaviour •Students confessed depression and thoughts of suicide •Additional responsibilities included Home Group, yard duty, sport, Harmony Day, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Day-to-day employment freed her from extra responsibilities •Most rewarding was when challenging students were doing work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Had own classroom •\$0 supply budget (at Edward) \$400 supply budget (at Mountain) •Had not previously considered ordering supplies •Requested to provide art materials to other teachers •Often asked to create projects unrelated to curriculum •Spent many hours cleaning out previous teacher's stuff •Students expected me to teach like

Narrative Unity (con't)	(Bridget) faculty & staff meetings, playground duty and coach soccer •Would like other Visual Arts staff to fall back on •Held differences with mentor teacher	(Maggie) required to attend regular faculty, staff and team meetings and supervising recess •Acquaintances with staff were superficial in a professional way •Made coffee dates with students o develop relationships	(Marcel) yearbook, homework club, lunch time activities, E-bytes and sex-educator in Pastoral Care class •Accidentally given a full load •Shared personal stories •Related to students with traumatic childhood	(Meret)	(Denise) their previous teacher •Difficulties drawing on vertical surface •Additional responsibilities included hall duty, hall sweeps, bus duty, staff meetings, the Responsibility Team, skate nights and track meets (Mountain) •Shared personal stories
Stage: Early Idealism	•Friend to students		•Friend to students •Keep work out of personal life	•Develop rapport with students	•Catered to student desires
Stage: Survival	•Annoyed with students •Students wasteful with supplies •Time management issues	•Stayed at school after hours to prepare for next lessons •Students lack of seriousness made it difficult to teach •Felt she was learning everything the hard way •Students wasteful with supplies	•Had to write reports at home •Students took advantage of easy-going demeanour	•No social life •Students controlled classes more than her •Difficulty finding calm competence •Students pushed boundaries with casual teacher	•Several hours spent at home preparing for lessons •Students controlled classes more than me •Students wasteful & destructive with supplies •Time management issues •Assaulted by student over mobile technology •Left to own resources to solve issues (Edward)
Stage: Recognising Difficulties	•Learned she needed to be more organised •Procedures needed adjustment	•Incorporated assessment into lessons •Confined in her boundaries by students, school and system			
Stage: Reaching Plateau		•Learned to work the room	•Not concerned with students being wasteful	•Learned to correct disruptive behaviour immediately •Discovered she needed control over class in order for them to be creative	
Stage: Moving On	•Revise approach to exam by starting earlier in the year			•Clear expectations produced amazing results	
Notable Transitions	•Discovered she can't be a friend to students •Learned how to be less confrontational and keep her calm in order to set an example for the students to follow •With time it became easier to gain student cooperation •Learned how to work the kiln •Improved relationship with mentor teacher	•Gained a realistic expectation of what she could actually do and that there was no point in trying to do more •Learned she was expecting students to care about school in a way they couldn't	•Found himself in disagreement with co-workers when given extra classes •Little time and energy for personal life •Teaching may be less hours but is more demanding and stressful than previous jobs •Learned to be more strict from start	•Discovered there was a talent to teaching she had yet to acquire	• Developed procedures & extra responsibilities at Mountain catered to a better working environment than what was experienced at Edward •Learned to be conscious in 'teacher' dialogue

Table 6: How did personal experiences affect the participants' Visual Arts teaching identities?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Meret	Denise
Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Many art skills were self-taught 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Felt insecure in drawing capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Prolific artist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Did not receive education on technicalities of art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many art skills were self-taught •Held resentments towards own education
Rules, Principles & Personal Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Practice drawing to avoid giving students bad examples •Learning keeps you from being stagnant 				
Narrative Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Would learn unfamiliar subjects before feeling comfortable teaching them •Comfort in teaching familiar practices 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Comfort in teaching familiar practices 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Wished I had been taught the basics of art
Notable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teaching helped her change and adapt •Teaching actively developed artistic knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Recognised drawing as something she needed to work on •Teaching actively developed artistic knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teaching actively developed artistic knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Desired teaching students the art skills she was never taught 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Resentments encouraged me to become a better teacher •Teaching actively developed artistic knowledge

Table 7: What approach was taken in implementing an art curriculum?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Meret	Denise
Rules, Principles & Personal Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teach Pop Art because it relates directly to student interests •Suggest but not direct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Understand student language in order to make connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Relate assignments to students' personal lives •Be cautious not to say too much in art instruction •Seniors should develop own ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Discuss famous works that are culturally relevant •Students consistently need praise •Suggest but not direct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Implement lessons that appeal to student interests
Narrative Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students re-created their visual environment •Connected popular cultural production with traditions of fine art •Balanced teacher-centred and student-centred approaches •Developed lessons through a combination of experience, self-interest, student input and syllabus guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students re-created their visual environment •Balanced teacher-centred and student-centred approaches •Developed lessons through syllabus guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students re-created their visual environment •Balanced teacher-centred and student-centred approaches •Developed lessons through a combination of experience, self-interest and student input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Often did not have freedom to develop own lessons •Balanced teacher-centred and student-centred approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Taught lessons relevant to culture and time (e.g. Y2K) •Balanced teacher-centred and student-centred approaches •Developed lessons through a combination of experience, self-interest, student input and DBAE •Ensured students were taught art theory
Stage: Moving On	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Helped students learn how to view and interpret visual world and make educated choices about which influences they choose to accept 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Attempted to humanise students in her curriculum •Helped students learn how to view and interpret visual world and make educated choices about which influences they choose to accept 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Helped students learn how to view and interpret visual world and make educated choices about which influences they choose to accept 	

Notable Transitions	(Bridget)	(Maggie) •Learned politics were not discussed in student homes, resulting in no sense of ethics in their consumer oriented, culturally conservative families	(Marcel) •Discovered students were lazy •Needed to pull ideas out from students	(Meret) •Developed ways to advance students' drawing skills	(Denise)
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Table 8: What were the participants' experiences with mimicry and using exemplars in the classroom?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Meret	Denise
Rules, Principles & Personal Philosophy	•Learning can occur through copying	•Making exemplars would be a waste of time •Few students take risk of developing original ideas •Produce something or nothing •Learning can occur through copying	•Lazy students copy •Copying does not promote creativity	•Students learn technique through copying •There should be a balance between original and copy work	•Students needed to see exemplars in order to understand procedures
Narrative Unity	•Saw students get upset when copy work did not resemble original	•Had exemplars from previous years •Students were resistant to creating original designs	•Students were resistant to creating original designs		•Spent several hours creating curriculum resources
Stage: Moving On		•Engaged in flexible purposing			
Notable Transitions					•Collection of student work could be added to curriculum resources for future practice •Less time would be spent on creating curriculum resources in future years

Table 9: How did the participants approach controversial issues?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Meret
Image				•Catholic upbringing
Rules, Principles & Personal Philosophy	•Pushing values is part of an honest understanding of contemporary art •There are ways to take a neutral stance on controversial subjects •It is appropriate to show aspects of nudity in the right context	•Be cautious of child protection laws and cultural diversity •Passionate responses are forced underground •Ignoring controversial topics hampers intellectual development •Same popular culture base as students would be distracting	•It is appropriate to show aspects of nudity in the right context	•Objected to telling violent and disturbing stories the way they were told to her, but needed to respect the Catholic school •Channel energy while providing guidance and structure •Students fear faith might diminish if they consider alternatives •Responsible for sharing adult perspective •Careful in speaking opinion
Narrative Unity		•Let student re-create Playboy logo •Discussed Schapelle Corby case		•Felt constricted in open discussion
Stage: Moving On		•Due to syllabus constraints, students need to make reference quickly if current issue is to be worth mentioning		
Notable Transitions		•Learned creative subjects were greatly censored	•Became less interested in protecting curriculum	•Could not force her thinking onto students

Table 10: What impact did the syllabus have on the artist-teachers?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Meret	Denise
Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Anticipated using syllabus •Syllabus required for HSC class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Syllabus formed basis for assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Did not consider syllabus in teaching methods 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Was not required to teach a specific curriculum
Rules, Principles & Personal Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Without the syllabus teachers could get lazy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Syllabus is a compromise and not perfect •Low marks affect self-esteem •If curriculum is unachievable, students will not enjoy the experience •Syllabus offered little creativity or flexibility •New teachers push for change •Concepts sound, but language intimidating 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Believed many teachers have not read the syllabus •Goals and visions were beautiful •Syllabus gave importance to her teaching 	
Metaphor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Just a small cog in the system 			
Cycles & Rhythms		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Too much work, not enough time 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Majority of class time spent in production
Narrative Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Syllabus took a while to understand •Daunted by aspects of the syllabus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Felt controlled by syllabus •Programs needed updating •No incentive to update syllabus 			
Notable Transitions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •As year wore down, so did resistance to inflexible syllabus 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Worked towards developing the history, aesthetics and critique components of DBAE

Table 11: How did the participants describe their teaching and teacher identities?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Meret	Denise
Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Attended high school in Sydney •Felt she was still a student •At top of professional scale as teacher in outback town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Attended selective school •Supported public education •Ideal position would be at selective school •Attempted to place herself between both student and teacher roles •Rational mother •Supportive wife of a teacher-husband •More of a natural teacher than graphic design artist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Left high school at age 15 •Left uni with BTeach over MTeach option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Father was concurrently a Visual Arts teacher •Did not feel like a complete teacher yet •Had little control over curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Followed mother's path in becoming a teacher •Felt young & energetic
Rules, Principles & Personal Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Keep questionable behaviour within reason •Need to balance work & personal life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Philosophy and attitudes at her selective high school were opposite to public schools •The calibre of concepts taught were not high enough in public school •Students' common knowledge was poor •Students were there because they had to be, they resented having to work and she intruded on their social time •Co-ed high school is a tough place to teach and less rewarding •Teachers often need to turn a blind eye •Put on 'best face' for the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Conceal sexuality at school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students possess power of defiance •Teaching involved responsibility for contributing to and having faith in younger generations •Stay respectful to students •World is evolving in positive way •Resist conforming to 'male authoritative model' •Refuse to compete against students •Need confidence and competence in feminine voice to be heard at boy's school •Teacher is in position of power •Respect the child, learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Keep resilient and teaching will get easier with experience

Rules, Principles & Personal Philosophy (con't)	(Bridget)	(Maggie) •Maintain image of constancy	(Marcel)	(Meret) and environment while providing a place for discovery & curiosity •Be reflective without being too critical	(Denise)
Metaphor	•Standards between her high school and the high school she taught at were worlds apart •City life is not be all & win all	•Paparazzi assessed her every move •Her teaching was too prescribed •Didn't believe many pennies dropped in her students' minds •Didn't fire off many lightening bolts		•Teaching is magic •Her job did not need to be perceived as babysitting •Becoming a teacher is an organic process that takes time	
Cycles & Rhythms	•Amount of responsibility was enormous challenge	•Sharing wine and engaging in 'teacher' talk with husband •Consciously taught daughter •Influenced students to feel positive about school	•Amount of responsibility was enormous challenge	•Tiring to keep centred, focused and strong around the male adolescent energy •Found nourishment in students grasping a new concept •Transient	•Consistently taught myself lessons I believed necessary to teach students
Narrative Unity	•Scared by teacher's influential power •Joined soccer team to balance personal with professional life •Missed family and Sydney	•Content with career change •Enrolled in French class to do something for herself	•Content with career change being later in life •Felt confident in classroom	•Difficult to relate to father who prided himself on authoritative aspects of teaching •Punitive attitudes were discouraging •Frustrated by instability	•Always did my best •Cleaned and decorated environment to keep organised & to appeal to student interests
Stage: Early Idealism		•Thought she would make fundamental difference in students' lives		•Wanted to create a level of safety where students could feel comfortable being eccentric •Wanted to channel energy and give students structure and guidance as they designed their own lives •If she were passionate than that would be contagious	
Stage: Survival	•Workload stacked up causing anxiety attack	•No time for herself •No place to relax			•Problems balancing time & keeping students on task
Notable Transitions	•Became easier to make lessons interesting and accessible once she gained mutual respect •Found employment security •Became depressed and fell ill adjusting to new environment •Gained confidence living on own •Eventually able to settle in Hay	•Discovered she had little impact on students' lives •Changes to personal style made her feel old •Anticipated becoming settled •Became more critical of daughter's teachers •More 'school' talk with husband	•Can't remember life as a student •Increased responsibility •Needed to get to know the staff more •Developed better organisational skills •Doubted himself in beginning but became a more settled teacher •Felt less stress & paranoia with time •Discovered his life was not so bad compared to some of his students •Received closure with ex	•Realised she was given more trust as student than she deserved •Discovered she didn't like being in an authoritative role to control student behaviour •Learned how to operate as a person, with her integrity and with her sensitivity in an environment that didn't encourage it •Found raw passion was not enough •Through Steiner she recognised personal growth affected her teaching. •Realised she could be more of a teacher than what she previously thought •Learned even casual teachers can do amazing	•Employed in 2 very different teaching positions •Learned computer technology •Felt alone at Edward, developed strong support network at Mountain •Work kept me focused during split with fiancé

Notable Transitions (con't)	(Bridget)	(Maggie)	(Marcel)	(Meret) things •Discovered she needed to work in a school that would support her •Was offered employment in 'dream' position at end of year	(Denise)
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Table 12: How did the participants describe their artist identities?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Meret	Denise
Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Artist-teacher •Brought artist identity into the classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Artist-teacher •Musician •Graphic design artist •Teaching provided stability •Brought artist identity into the classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Artist-teacher •Active journal keeper •Belonged to art group •Sought attention, yet shy •Brought artist identity into the classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Artist-teacher •Father was artist •Musician •Flamenco dancer •Enrolled in Steiner course •Brought artist identity into the classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Artist-teacher •Musician •Brought artist identity into the classroom
Cycles & Rhythms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •HSC class allowed time for personal art •Constantly learning along with students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Unable to find time & energy for personal art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Difficulties finding time & energy for personal art •Artwork was often product of emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Artwork often responded to Catholic experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Unable to find time & energy for personal art
Narrative Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Integrated both artist and teacher identities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Creativity needed purpose •Creativity developed skills needed for teaching Textiles •Needed more space & energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Creativity developed skills needed for teaching Textiles •Balanced artist and teacher roles by pursuing them at different times and spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Integrated both artist and teacher identities •Connected to feminist conceptual approach •Drew while teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Directed creative energy towards teaching
Stage: Early Idealism		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Believed she would make art with students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teaching career would permit time for personal artwork •Believed he would make art with students 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Believed I would make art with students
Stage: Survival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No time to make art with class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No time to make art with class 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No time to make art with class
Stage: Recognising Difficulties		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Need to be aware of class at all times 			
Notable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Moved away from family and gained space for art •Did art in classroom and in home •Isolated country life allowed more time for art •Worked with oil paints for the first time in years •Discovered students enjoyed watching her paint •Recognised she had lost touch of doing art for enjoyment •Explored variety of subject matter •Practiced projects she could teach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Learned to sew •Teaching/ performance became her art •Graphic design became something of the past •Allowed teacher role to dominate over artist role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Demise of art group •Became involved with Melbourne artist •Under pressure to develop new series of works •Learned to sew •Worked less in his journal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Began articulating issues with Catholicism •Discontinued Flamenco •Began to engage in a cerebral experience •Contemplated ways to teach the art she was doing •Steiner influenced her to experience reverence and beauty as a form of meditation •Moved away from political analysis and personal process •Transitioned into a technical sphere - gained competency and documented what she saw, rather than express the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teaching helped me become a more confident artist •Art skills developed through teaching others •Discovered personal style was design oriented which reflected in my teaching methods •Teaching took priority over personal artistic creation •Allowed teacher role to dominate over artist role

Table 13: Do the participants view teaching as a form of art?

	Bridget	Maggie	Marcel	Meret	Denise
Rules, Principles & Personal Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •It is important for Art teachers to be practicing artists •Teaching is never a bore •Teachers are always learning •Negative attitudes or approaches excludes teacher from being considered as partaking in this form of art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •It is important for Art teachers to be practicing artists. •Not everybody can teach •Teaching requires talent •Art is an intellectual pursuit •Teachers should be smart •Not all teachers possess intellect •Teachers should look nice and smile •Students don't think of teachers as human 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •It is important for Art teachers to be practicing artists •Practice art to understand •Negative attitudes or approaches excludes teacher from being considered as partaking in this form of art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •It is important for Art teachers to be practicing artists •Teaching is the ultimate creative act •Teaching expands consciousness and forces connection with students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •It is important for Art teachers to be practicing artists •Teaching is an art
Metaphor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teaching is the art of being versatile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teaching is a performance •Teaching is weaving something out of nothing •This web is meant to catch students and hold them in its net •There's magic to teaching •She's Mary Poppins spinning plates •She's constantly an entertainer 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improvising instantaneously is performance art •Students are raw media •Students are live sculptures 	
Notable Transitions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Artistic life now focused on performance 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Energy put towards teaching career made it my new art project

APPENDIX B
University of Sydney Human Ethics Approval



The University of Sydney

NSW 2006 Australia

Human Research Ethics Committee
<http://www.usyd.edu.au/ethics/human/>

Chairman: **COPY**
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29 April 2004

Dr R Ewing
School of Policy and Practice
Faculty of Education and Social Work
Building A35
The University of Sydney

Dear Dr Ewing

I am pleased to inform you that the Human Research Ethics Committee at its meeting on 19 April 2004 approved your protocol with a condition. Please note that subject to annual monitoring returns, the approved protocol is valid for five years.

Title: *The transitions of early career visual arts teachers*
Ref No.: 7392
Approval Period: *April 2004 – April 2005*
Authorised Personnel: *Dr R Ewing*
Mrs D Stanley
Dr R Gibson

Condition:

- S4.3 (b) 2nd sentence states *"If I am unable to recruit... I will then recruit participants from the University of New South Wales' visual arts teacher training program."* –If you need to recruit participants from the University of New South Wales the Committee recommends you to apply for approval at the Institution.

In order to comply with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*, and in line with the Human Research Ethics Committee requirements the Chief Investigator's responsibility is to ensure that:

- (1) The individual researcher's protocol complies with the final and Committee approved protocol.

- (2) Modifications to the protocol cannot proceed until such approval is obtained in writing.
- (3) The confidentiality and anonymity of all research subjects is maintained at all times, except as required by law.
- (4) All research subjects are provided with a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.
- (5) The Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form are to be on University of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.
- (6) The following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Sheet. *Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager of Ethics Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811.*
- (7) The standard University policy concerning storage of data and tapes should be followed. While temporary storage of data or tapes at the researcher's home or an off-campus site is acceptable during the active transcription phase of the project, permanent storage should be at a secure, University controlled site for a minimum of five years.
- (8) A progress report should be provided by the end of each year. Failure to do so will lead to withdrawal of the approval of the research protocol and re-application to the Committee must occur before recommencing. **Your first report will be due on 30 April 2005.**
- (9) A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Yours sincerely



Associate Professor Stewart Kellie
Chairman, Human Research Ethics Committee

Encl. Participant Information Statement
Informed Participant Consent Form
Interview Topic Guide

Cc: ✓ Mrs D Stanley, 2/10 Ocean Road, Manly NSW 2095



The University of Sydney

NSW 2006 Australia

Human Research Ethics Committee
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25 May 2004

Dr R Ewing
School of Policy and Practice
Building A35
The University of Sydney

Dear Dr Ewing

Title: The transitions of early career visual arts teachers

Reference: 7398

The Executive Committee at its meeting of 24 May 2004 considered Denise Stanley's correspondence of 07 May 2004 concerning the condition in your approval letter dated 29 April 2004 and it was noted with thanks.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Stewart Kellie
Chairman, Human Research Ethics Committee

✓ Cc: Mrs Denise Stanley, 2/10 Ocean Road, Manly NSW 2095

APPENDIX C
Participant Information Statement



The University of Sydney

School of Policy and Practice

NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA

Denise Stanley

Faculty of Education and Social Work A35
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Telephone +61 2 9351 5419

Facsimile +61 2 9351 4580

Research Study:

The Transitions of Early Career Visual Arts Teachers

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

6 April 2004
Dear Participant,

You are invited to take part in a research study that will investigate the transitions of first year visual arts teachers. The focus of the project is to understand the challenges that first year visual arts teachers face after graduation from a preservice teacher training program and through their first year of teaching. The research will compare the commonalities in this transition through the use of narratives. Denise Stanley, a PhD candidate from the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney, is conducting the study as part of her doctoral program.

If you agree to participate, you will be required to have four, one-hour interviews. The first interview will be in spring 2004, the second in autumn 2005, the third in winter 2005, and the final interview will be conducted at the end of the first year of teaching in spring 2005. Contact will be made by phone to arrange an appropriate location to meet, and to set a convenient time for the interviews to be conducted.

All aspects of this study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the primary researcher and supporting supervisors, Robyn Ewing and Robyn Gibson, will have access to the information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

All interviews will be audio tape recorded and then transcribed. Participants will be given the opportunity to preview interview transcripts before they are used.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to participate, and if you do participate, you may withdraw at any time without reason, disadvantages, penalties, or any adverse consequences.

After you have read this information, Denise will discuss it further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage of the research process, please feel free to contact Denise at home: (02) 9977 3251, office: 9351 5419, or by e-mail: d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au

This information sheet is for you to keep.
Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager for Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811, e-mail Ms. Gail Brody at gbriody@mail.usyd.edu.au or fax the Ethics office at (02) 9351 6706.

APPENDIX D
Participant Consent Form



The University of Sydney

School of Policy and Practice

NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA

Faculty of Education and Social Work A35
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Denise Stanley

Telephone +61 2 9351 2791
Facsimile +61 2 9351 4580

INFORMED PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I,, give consent to my participation in this research project.
Name (Please Print)

TITLE: The Transitions of Early Career Visual Arts Teachers

In giving my consent, I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher.
3. I am aware of the inconveniences associated with the project.
4. I understand the interview will be audio tape recorded.
5. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher now or in the future.
6. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way, which reveals my identity.
7. I have been given a copy of the Participant Information Statement to keep.

Signed: Date:

Name:

Witness: Date:

Name:

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager for Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811, e-mail Ms. Gail Brody at gbriody@mail.usyd.edu.au or fax the Ethics office at (02) 9351 6706.

APPENDIX E

Transcript Excerpts: Participants' Reasons for their Pseudonym Selections

The following transcripts outline direct dialogue between me (D) and each of my participants. In these four short excerpts, the reader can 'hear,' in the words of the participants themselves, their reasons for selecting their pseudonym names.

Bridget

(pointing to Bridget Riley's black and white designs)

D: How did the students react to these?

B: They really liked them. I was showing them the actual exhibition catalogue and I was walking around and showing them pictures and they were going, "oooh oooh, my eyes!"

D: What do you like about them?

B: I just love lines and shapes. I think it is just because it is never stagnant – your eye is always moving somewhere. For instance with the "Blaze" one – you're drawn to the middle and as your eye works out – there is so much movement you look this way and that way.

D: What do you think of her [Bridget Riley]?

B: I think she is such a talented woman. Just to come up with what she does – nothing is ever the same – she is always coming up with something different. And to use a subject matter like straight lines – At first you would think a straight line is a straight line – How many times can you paint it before it comes boring? And she hasn't exhausted that yet.

D: What do you know about her?

B: She was born in England – the Commonwealth 1931, I think – she bases her works on nature.

D: Does that relate to you at all?

B: Oh yeah – because I look at nature for colours

D: Why did you choose Bridget Riley to be your pseudonym?

B: I made myself a list of all my favourite painters. And I thought how many of these are female? Well, not many. And I thought who is a person that I really admire their work – and I didn't want to call myself Van Gogh because I'm not male and I'm not going to cut off my ear. I like Van Gogh's treatment of painting and his colours are awesome – But then one of my other favourite artists is Mark Rothko – just because I like the floating squares – I'd have to say Rothko, Gerhard Richter...

D: What is his famous artwork?

B: A bit of everything really. He's one of the few artists that I know of who has worked in absolutely everything. And that's one thing I aspire to do is just work in a range of things. So I like those two and Riley, obviously. I would have to say that they are my favourite artists.

D: Mine would have to be Dali – have you brought up Dali at all with your classes?

B: Yeah, I have shown them a still life and they go, "This is weird." We quickly went over it.

D: How did you feel your students reacted to Bridget Riley?

B: Really positive. I think it was because it was something visually strong that they latched on to straightaway. They just couldn't get over how cool it was.

D: Did they feel capable of being able to do artwork like that themselves?

B: At first they were thinking, "I can't do that." But once they started they were, "oh, we can do this."

D: So what was the project that came out of this?

B: It was a painting.

D: So they did an optical illusion painting?

B: Well, not necessarily an illusion – but it was an optical design.

D: Did they use rulers and stencils?

B: They used rulers – no stencils.

D: How did it feel to teach about this artist?

B: Well it was good because it was something I'm interested in – and when I'm interested in something I am more enthusiastic. It always helps when you think back on school experience – if the teacher was standing there thinking, "I'm so bored." Then obviously you're not going to listen to her.

D: So, will this be something that you teach again?

B: Yes, definitely

D: Do you feel that your unit on Riley will increase?

B: Yep

D: How might it be different next time?

B: I might change the activity – or maybe they can do a body of work. I mean some kids got up to their second painting because they work faster than others – a lot of kids barely finished the first one.

Maggie

D: Why did you choose Margaret Preston to be your pseudonym?

M: Well, I was thinking – I have always quite liked her. In fact at one point I thought about getting a tattoo of a piece of hers – a detail of one of the wood cuts of the native flowers – (the gum flowers) So aesthetically, I quite liked them – but there was an article on Margaret Preston in the Good Weekend supplement in the Sydney Morning Herald in the months obviously leading up to this exhibition – and it was just interesting reading about her life. She was a very wild woman, fairly hard drinking, difficult woman –and I am not saying that's what I am –some of it is what I would perhaps like to be if I didn't have any of those constraints that I was talking about – I could just live the life of an artist. Since having seen the exhibition – some of the pieces I am quite familiar with – but just the development of – she's the star of the 20th Century in Australia – in many ways – the way that her art goes from those very lyrical, domestic sort of realistic sort of paintings early on through all of that stuff – it's very hip – I like all those things – and I like how she works the still lifes – like she shows the leaves that have fallen off. They are not perfect – and they're very strong and also they are very graphic.

D: You said you wanted to go by "Maggie"

M: That's what they were calling her – and that's what her friend called her

D: Have you ever discussed her in your curriculum?

M: I haven't. I could. I probably could with some of the things – maybe I haven't yet because it has to do with that time thing of the distractors. If I was constructing my own lessons from scratch, I could – but how to fit it in with this prescribed work - I haven't got the time. If I was working perhaps at even a different type of school, that would be encouraged. There is also a cross-cultural influence in her work too – like a lot of her stuff was influenced by Japanese wood block prints and then she was one of the first people who used Aboriginal motives in her work – which has become quite controversial since – because of the sensitivities – but at the time she didn't acknowledge that. I'm a 20th century kind of girl – I am very interested – like that was when Australia was really young

and cultural life was developing and Mosman at that time – and Sydney had been like an artist sort of colony – so that was the end of that era and I do imagine what it might have been like to live in Sydney during that time. (*they had this in Paris too*) I am the oldest of two daughters just like Margaret Preston. At 12 (When Margaret Preston started painting) I started at a selective high school that I got into and that was when my eyes were open to a lot more things too. (*Both were smart and advanced, both have training in art, both are Australian, married*) My artwork is domestic in the same sort of sense - Margaret Preston is very much my grandma's era – you know when we were talking ages ago about the buttons and all that? Those sort of domestic scenes I relate to.

D: “Quick witted, lively writer on art and travel” (*reading about Margaret Preston*)

M: That's moi all over! Yes

Marcel

D: Why did you choose Marcel Duchamp as your pseudonym?

M: I love his work. Just the way he sort of is not constructive – It is just like that – I mean, hello?

D: What is it about the urinal?

M: It is just there. It's just a piece of ceramic urinal ... he was able to choose anything and make it art – I think that's what makes me drawn to him, really. Like even the bicycle wheel – just turning it upside down and sticking it on a wheel. He decided that that was art. And that was really what made him.

D: How do you identify with that yourself?

M: Even though he is an artist, and I am an artist – sometimes you feel like you have to justify why you do art or why you put text on a piece of artwork and that's why I like him – is because he was able to do that as well. He just stuck a wheel on a stool and didn't give a shit really – but yeah – he would still have to explain things – and that's why I like him- he didn't give a shit and I am hoping I don't really. Art can be anything – but I don't think any person that is not artistic can say, “That's art” like a pin – like stick it on a canvas and say that's art – because that's just being stupid. For an artist to do that, they would have some kind of justification – there would have to be.

D: How do you determine the justification of signing a urinal R. Mutt and calling that art?

M: Oh God knows – sorry, I can't answer that.

D: Duchamp was a painter, a poet, experimental in film, and a chess player.

M: Oh, I hate chess. Yes – he played chess with another artist in his film

D: Influenced by cubism.

M: Yeah I like cubism

D: Although you don't like Picasso?

M: Yeah, a bit odd, isn't it? I just don't like the mainstream – but then I read Harry Potter – so that is really contradictive isn't it?

D: What do you think of DaDaism and Surrealism?

M: I really like them actually. I mean I like DaDa because they use text and things like that...

D: What is it about text that you like?

M: There's not enough of it in the world.

D: In art?

M: In art and in the world. I stand in bookshops and sometimes I say – but then I am going to contradict myself again – they got all these books in bookshops and I think – who the hell reads all these books? And I think – I would never read this book – but somebody

must have bought this book to read it – there must have been someone out there. All these sappy ones that come out – who the hell would read them?

D: What did that have to do with DaDa and surrealism?

M: The text – and dreams as well – I find that really fascinating – interpreting them – and how you can do lots of artworks on that – it’s what I’m trying to get the kids to do.

D: Have you done that?

M: Myself? No.

D: Analysed your dreams?

M: No – I don’t need to. No – I don’t want to go there.

D: Duchamp liked to confuse the public

M: Oh really?

D: Do you relate to that?

M: Yes, I do. That’s a Leo thing. That’s such a Leo thing. Duchamp is also a Leo. A lot of my friends are Leos – and they confuse – my artwork – look you sat there and couldn’t work it out - if I hadn’t have told you what it was, I would have confused the hell out of you – a lot of my artworks are confusing and I think that’s – I shouldn’t say it’s a Leo thing actually – I’m assuming it’s a Leo thing.

D: *Reading Duchamp quote:* “I have forced myself to contradict myself in order to avoid conforming to my own tastes.”

M: Yes – well, I contradict myself all the time.

D: Hmm.. yes – the world needs more texts – but who reads all these books that are already out there?

M: Yes, exactly.

D: I think Duchamp is saying art is more in what you think of it than what it actually is

M: Yep – exactly

D: So, when you see this urinal what do you think?

M: Not the urinal...

D: Okay, let’s look at the bicycle wheel on a stool. The first time you ever saw that image, what did you think?

M: I saw myself – I saw the bicycle wheel as myself - a lonely bicycle wheel going around and around and around. That’s how I felt when I saw it. Going around, and especially not going anywhere – by myself – stuck to a stool.

Meret

D: So these are some images of Meret Oppenheim that I brought.

M: Oh, they’re great

M: Well, that is the cup and saucer one obviously – the one I saw as a kid.

D: Me too, that’s the only one I have ever seen.

M: It’s only famous because it’s in the textbook that you study at school.

D: What do you know about it?

M: Well, I know it’s surrealist – and it’s meant to reflect oral sex – Doesn’t she reference that? They didn’t say that in the textbook (laugh)

D: So, how do you relate to that?

M: Oral sex? Well, it’s got that ‘eek’ factor as well as being curious.

D: So how does that appeal to you then?

M: I think just because of the juxtaposition. Fur on something that is usually edible – And I like surrealism. Usually a lot of teenagers do - definitely teenagers – I mean I did when I was a teenager.

D: I still do

M: Yeah, me too

D: So why did you choose Oppenheim to be your pseudonym?

M: Probably because she was the first female artist that I felt connected with.

D: In which ways?

M: And because she's a sculpturer – and she's a conceptual artist really – I mean she's classified as a surrealist – but it is her ideas that are the artwork – rather than the technique – and I guess I relate to that.

D: Do you find yourself doing that kind of stuff?

M: Yeah – I even like just the idea – it doesn't even need to be a form – just the idea is enough.

D: Was it hard for you to choose a pseudonym?

M: No

D: Have you discussed her at all in your classrooms?

M: No

D: Would you?

M: Yeah, yeah, yeah...

D: She became depressed during WWII

M: Oh yeah, I bet she did

D: Loved fancy dress and rituals, theatre and carnival

M: Oh really – oh wow!

D: She felt females were devalued and restricted – Have you ever felt that way?

M: I'm always going on about it – I guess just the female... I think that I have a really female voice – and I think that needs to be heard more culturally – not just in the home. So it's about promoting that and diversity in that – like the female perspective – like to give the female perspective.

D: Okay, I want to read you this quote from Oppenheim: "For woman, the implications are that they have to live their own female life as well as the female life that men project on them – thus, they are woman times two – that's too much."

M: Meret Oppenheim said that? Oh wow, that's great – that she distinguishes between the two – like this is what men project on me and this is what I really am.

D: And so we're like having double the expectations. Do you feel that way ever?

M: Yeah! Well, the projection I find is pressure and it's always a fight to have – well that's what I'm saying, you're true voice is who I am really am – and so we're talking to this world that is projecting something else on to us - so that's the conflict.

D: And your artwork...

M: Is all about that – God! She's great!

D: So, you had no idea how cool Oppenheim truly was? (Laugh)

M: Yeah, and as a teacher, within a school environment that like – Like I am teaching in the most patriarchal school that you could possibly imagine – or actually it's probably even more patriarchal than that – But I am trying to have my voice within this really male bastion and I think my voice – I think it really needs to be heard - like I am teaching boys and they so need to be able to hear a female voice. Like it's crazy to disappear it. And they hear me – they definitely hear me – But I am also very aware of that pressure to be someone else – and to conform to that model – and I am managing to maintain myself within it.

APPENDIX F
General Interview Questions

First Interview (November-February 2004/05)

- Give a brief biographical background.
- Why do you want to go into teaching?
- What did you do before deciding to go into teaching?
- Describe your identity in relation to art.
- Do you consider yourself an artist?
- Do you consider yourself prepared for a career in teaching?
- How do you feel about your preservice teacher training program?
- What are your expectations for the year ahead?
- How do you feel about entering the teaching profession?

Second (April-June 2005) and Third (August 2005) Interviews:

- Discuss the transitions you feel you have undergone.
- Describe any problems, challenges, or issues.
- How do you relate your preservice training to your present situation?
- Describe how you now feel about you identity in relation to art.
- How are you connecting your perception of art and art education to the reality of your students' world?
- What are your feelings towards visual arts teachers practicing their own art? Do they need to be practicing artists? Can they be practicing artists?
- Is teaching a form of art?

Fourth Interview (December 2005):

- What stages do you see yourself as having experienced in the transition to a career in teaching?
- What variables do you see as influencing movement through such stages?
- Were there any unexpected realities to the profession?
- What do you believe to be important realistic expectations for future teachers?
- How has your transition to a teaching career affected your identity in relation to art?
- Give reasons to how your expectations of teaching and identity in relation to art may have changed or been altered since the beginning of the year.
- What challenges have you encountered over this past year?
- Is there any additional information you would like to add?

APPENDIX G
Excerpts: Field Notes

- parents divorced during last yr of Primary school
- Mum moved to Sydney & she could go to Sydney Girls High (selective school)
- Yr 11 finally had a teacher that taught drawing

made a film for HSC art major work
got student award, was in Art Express

- UTS - Bachelor of Design in Visual Communication

- after uni worked in bookshops, childcare, & played bass in bands
- worked in rehearsal studio doing graphics for bands
- job in art department of Festival Mushroom Records
- Married? (when)) got pregnant that yr.
- Had Daughter ←
- worked w/ Festival Mushroom 5 more mths → they moved to Melbourne

██████ = together 9 yrs
married 7
never really speaks
about teaching

Sydney Uni
Double Degree
art & Design & Technology

APPENDIX H
Excerpts: Personal Log

IDEAS For themes

lessons learnt
 what works
 what doesn't

Management
 screaming (Meret)

Meret - to just be herself

Bridget
 Marcel - classes w/ all girls
 [low male interest]

Moments of conflict

issues

Meret - A lot of teachers don't like kids
 Bridget
 Marcel

Assignments that cater to student interests
 selecting projects - how/why

Big interest in Surrealism

Security issues

Participants ment relating to this
 like Meret @ Christmas table (3)

Teaching subjects not trained for - getting positions that were unexpected (resonate)
 Having to reapply

Subject Specific challenges
 benefits of (diversity)

Advice to future V.A. teachers

Metaphor Meret = "Childcare" "Babysitting"
 Sharing personal work (from Uni experience or pro)

How do they stay current with art now they are out of Uni
 iPods/mobile → discipline
 ↓
 Pop Culture

Reflections on Teacher Ed Programme
 - Did attitudes change throughout yr.

Copy work
 Environment (resonate me?) / temporarily employed (resonate)

How did ideas toward artwork/artmaking transition
 Meret → from personal/political

All the different hats you wear ← links to Marcel's advice to new teachers

Thoughts/ideas/expectations changed throughout yr

think

Catering to Learning Styles

Reflections about the students
 maybe use this as sample section of novel?

Beliefs

Why selected the projects (artwork)
 that they did
 influences = textbook prior knowledge syllabus

TEACHING teaches the TEACHER

SECTION 2

- untraditional composition (Oscar project) ✓
- How Job was FOUND ✓
 - Bridget (e-mail → call) ✓
 - Marcel (call) ✓
 - Maggie ✓
 - Meret ✓
- Meret still Seeking Employment ✓
- Meret on casual Teaching ✓
- Bridget Moving to Hay ^{during visit}
- Differences between Hay & Sydney
- Marcel Moving to Melbourne ✓
- Maggie's Ordeal & beginning of Year and school background ✓
- Transition on MTEACH thoughts
- Thoughts on Lifestyle Change \$\$\$
- Meret
 - Steiner
 - Sat. School

artistic
PROVERBS

Artistic Selves, sect. 2

- Insight into Maggie
 - Meret
 - Marcel
 - Bridget.
- Finding time to make art
 - Meret, Maggie, Bridget, Marcel
- Understanding of art since being a teacher
- Student Sample Making
- Staying Current [see STUDENT theme!]



STUDENTS' CLASSES

- First Days
 - Bridget
- About the School
 - Bridget
 - Marcel
- About Meret
 - Marcel's coworker
- About the staff
 - Bridget
 - Maggie
 - Marcel
- Extra Expectations
 - Bridget
 - Maggie
 - Marcel
- Taking Place Over Old Teacher
 - Bridget
- On being the new teacher
 - Maggie
 - Marcel

- Personal (stress)
 - Maggie
 - Meret
 - Bridget
- Current Thoughts on Teaching
 - Maggie, Marcel, Meret, Bridget
- Kid Seems You out? About
 - Bridget, Maggie
- Teacher Identity
 - Marcel
 - On being male & gay
- Teacher Image
 - Maggie
- Describing Self as teacher
 - Marcel
- Bringing Work Home
 - Meret
- Teaching Catholic Boys
 - Meret

- Teacher Identity
 - Meret
- Intellectually Stimulated
 - Meret
- Lesson Influence
 - Bridget
- Discipline
 - Maggie
- Display Student Work
 - Bridget, Maggie, Marcel
- Controversial Subject
 - Meret, Bridget, Maggie, Marcel
- Disruptions to the Curriculum

http://www.geocities.com/sk123/stanley
 July 6, 2006 at Sydney
 year area as of yet not
 scheduled dates in
 (D) CALENDAR PRIORITY
 image

MAGGIE NIPPLE STORY - MANAGEMENT
 MERET LEARNING EXPERIENCE AS CASUAL TEACHER



Write Long Version
 then cut out @ check Lit Review
 to make short version
 but put what was cut out
 in the Appendix

Analysis pulls out main themes

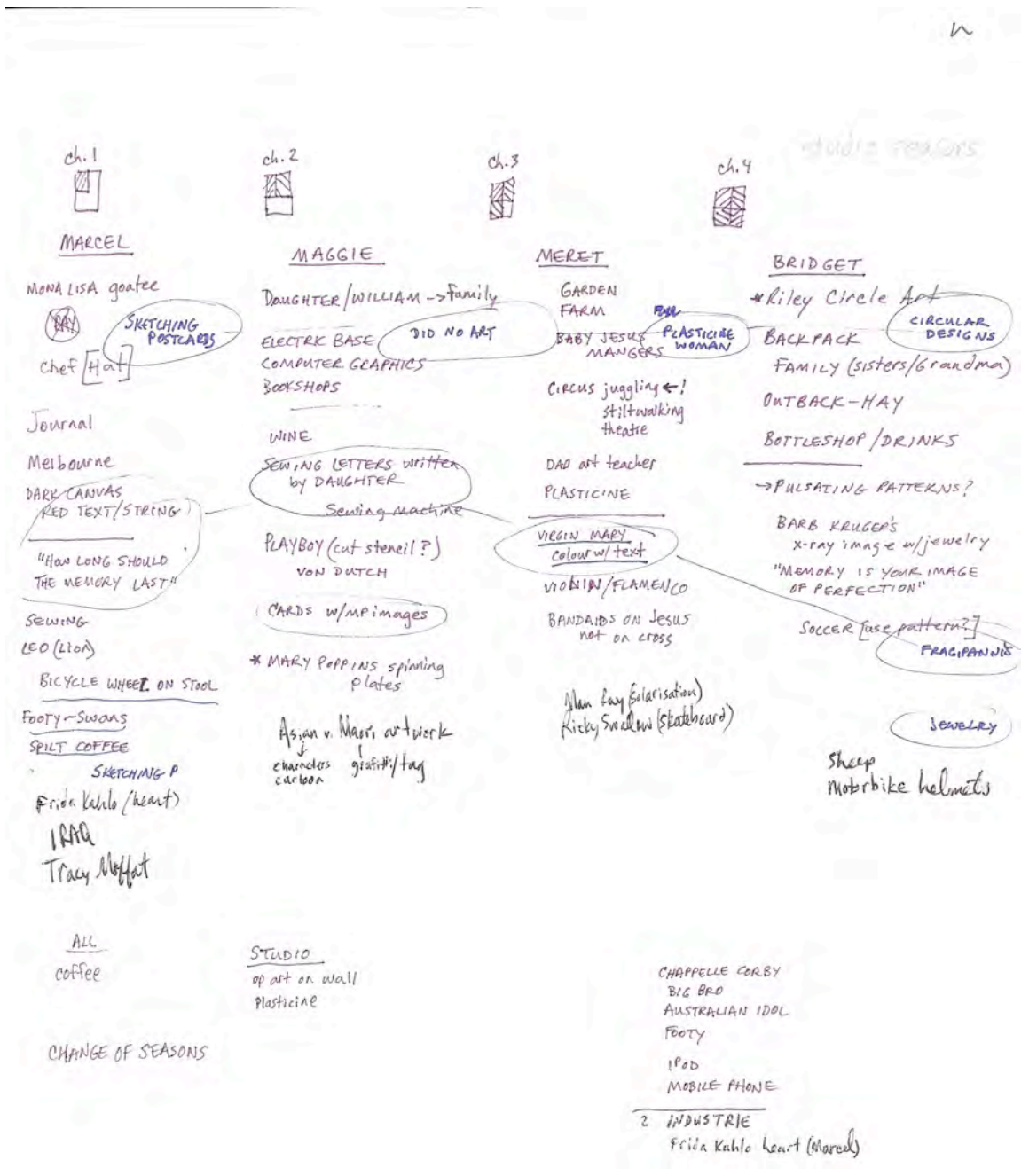
I write
 analysed so if
 I am speaking to
 the group

As the researcher
 in a hard copy &
 posted to their address

or? IN PERSON?
 Like we meet up again
 -bring in studio image

Major theme =
Culturally Relevant
 -how appropriate, given
 I wanted a cultural
 experience

	MARCEL	MAGGIE	MERET	BRIDGET
	<p>Mana Lisa Gantee</p> <p>Chop hat Journal</p> <p>sketching postcard</p> <p>postcard dark raincoat strange tent</p> <p>SUMMER</p> <p>Melbourne</p>	<p>Daughter/William → family</p> <p>DID NO ART</p> <p>electric base computer graphics Bookshops</p> <p>Gum Blossom</p>	<p>Garden Farm</p> <p>Baby Jesus/Mangers</p> <p>PLASTICINE WOMAN</p> <p>Circus - Juggling! Stillwalking Theatre</p> <p>Dad Art Teacher</p> <p>Plasticine</p>	<p>Backpack Family (sisters/grandma)</p> <p>Bottle Shop</p> <p>CIRCULAR DESIGNS</p>
	<p>Dark Canvas Red Text/string</p> <p>"How long should the memory last"</p> <p>sketching marks face</p> <p>Le Lion</p> <p>Hairy Dog</p> <p>Harry Potter</p> <p>TRACY MOFFATT</p> <p>FRIDA KAHLO HEART</p> <p>AUTUMN</p>	<p>Sewing Letters by Daughter</p> <p>Wine</p> <p>Play Boy-stencil</p> <p>Van Dutch → find artwork</p> <p>Asian v. Maori artwork</p> <p>characters ↓ graffiti tag</p> <p>cartoon ↓ tag</p>	<p>VIOLIN/FLAMENCO</p> <p>Virgin Mary Color w/Text</p> <p>Wanda: Mary Ray (solarisation)</p> <p>Risky Swallow (skateboard)</p> <p>Gardenings POPE</p>	<p>OUTBACK-HAY COUNTRY</p> <p>PAINTING FRANCIS PAIN'S AGAINST PATTERN BACKGROUND</p> <p>Sheep</p> <p>Motorbike Helmets</p> <p>BARB KRUBER</p> <p>"Memory is Your Image of Perfection"</p> <p>Soccer</p> <p>POP ART</p>
	<p>sex-ed</p> <p>WINTER</p>	<p>Mary Poppins</p> <p>"Happy Face"</p> <p>Making Cards</p>	<p>Sketching ki do - pencil</p> <p>Juggling Sculpting Kids</p> <p>French class</p>	<p>too many flies</p> <p>Make Flies!</p> <p>Jewelry</p> <p>Navel</p> <p>Brid</p> <p>Denise Street</p>
	<p>STUDIO</p> <p>Op Art on wall</p> <p>Coffee - get beans for background</p> <p>Jeant face</p> <p>contour wheel</p> <p>JERRY</p> <p>SPRING</p> <p>November</p>	<p>AUTUMN</p> <p>Schappelle Corby</p> <p>Big Bro/Aus Idol</p> <p>Footy</p> <p>iPod</p> <p>Mobile Phones/Dalinci Code</p> <p>Van Dutch</p> <p>Frída Kahlo/Tracy Moffatt</p> <p>Industrie</p> <p>POP ART</p>	<p>WINTER</p> <p>spitt coffee</p> <p>Mary Poppins</p> <p>Virgin flight</p> <p>"What is red?"</p>	<p>SUMMER</p> <p>watermelon</p> <p>Thumb Sucker</p> <p>Kick off thongs</p>



APPENDIX I
Excerpts: Participant E-mail Communication

Bridget

At 03:17 PM 24/02/2005, you wrote:

Hi Denise, how are you going?

I have some big news – Just before Christmas i got a permanent posting for visual arts in Hay, (the riverina area) about 8-9 hours southwest of Sydney! So far im really enjoying it, as i only have smaller classes (20 is the biggest) and staff and kids are really nice too. I'm slowly getting there in terms of getting myself completely organised, but i suppose that's what the first year of teaching is all about – disorganisation! Anyhow, I just thought I'd let you know about my move, and if you still need me for your research, you're more than welcome to come for a little visit.

Cheers,
XXXXX

From: "Bridget" <XXXXXX@hotmail.com>
To: d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au
Subject: RE: pseudonym
Date: Mon, 20 Jun 2005 13:48:13 +1000
X-OriginalArrivalTime: 20 Jun 2005 03:48:13.0689 (UTC) FILETIME=[E26F1E90:01C5754A]
X-usyd-cess: \$Revision: 120 \$; cleaned=0 defanged=0

Hi Denise

Sorry it's taken me so long to get back to you. I think i will choose Bridget Riley as a female painter's pseudonym. I like her work and the way she goes about creating it - it's very methodical and a step by step process, kind of like teaching visual arts to kids.

Have a great time in Spain (don't have too much fun!) I hope it goes well. Have a safe trip and i'll catch up with you in July sometime.

XXXXX

From: "XXXXXX" <XXXXXXX@hotmail.com>
To: d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au
Subject: RE: narrative check
Date: Tue, 26 Jul 2005 10:17:21 +1000
X-OriginalArrivalTime: 26 Jul 2005 00:17:21.0185 (UTC) FILETIME=[63D33910:01C59177]
X-usyd-cess: \$Revision: 168 \$; cleaned=0 defanged=0

Hi Denise

Glad all went well for you in Spain!

The narrative sounds like what I said so its all good.

I am coming up to Sydney for a weekend in August but its pretty much booked up with my brother's 21st birthday party, and i have to spend the sunday travelling home. Im not sure if i'll be up there again before the next holidays.....

XXXXX

From: "Bridget" <XXXXXX@hotmail.com>
To: d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au
Subject: RE: Package Sent
Date: Tue, 07 Nov 2006 14:02:10 +1100
X-OriginalArrivalTime: 07 Nov 2006 03:02:14.0774 (UTC)

hi denise

i read the chapter. it was really good, i was going to read a bit at a time, but was so engrossed in the story that i couldn't put it down. aside from a few minor spelling errors, i think its great!!! well done.

XXXXX

Maggie

Date: Sun, 19 Jun 2005 19:03:05 +1100
From: "Maggie" <XXXXXX@ozemail.com.au>
To: Denise Stanley <d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au>
Subject: Re: pseudonym

Hi Denise,

Wow, your dance card seems to be full! I'm flat out too with those "first year teacher at the end of Term 2 doing heaps of reporting and a little tired" routine!

Call me Maggie, short for Margaret Preston. I will justify the connection when we next meet.

Good luck at the conference, ole!

Regards,
XXXXXX

Date: Fri, 26 Aug 2005 18:24:39 +1100
From: "Maggie" <XXXXXX@ozemail.com.au>
To: Denise Stanley <d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au>
Subject: Re: concerns

Hi Denise,

sorry about the lateness of my reply. Too busy to check emails everyday at present!

I am looking forward to meeting with you, no probs. with continuing your project at all -- it's just finding some time. Is Wednesday 7th Sept. at Uni too late for you? Otherwise, a Saturday morning is best bet. I'm happier to travel in than have you make the trek here.

The second transmission of questions came through fine, so I'll have thought about my answers by the time we meet!

Speak with you soon,

XXXXXX

Date: Mon, 14 Nov 2005 08:13:44 +1100
From: "Maggie" <XXXXXX@ozemail.com.au>
To: Denise Stanley <d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au>
Subject: Re: interview
X-usyd-cess: \$Revision: 230 \$; cleaned=0 defanged=0

Hi Denise,

I'll certainly have heaps to tell you when we next meet - early December is fine, let's speak about a specific date this week sometime.

Take care and see you soon

XXXXXX

Marcel

Date: Sun, 27 Mar 2005 10:29:06 +1000 (EST)
From: "Marcel" <XXXXXX@yahoo.com.au>
Subject: Re: second interview
To: Denise Stanley <d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au>

yeah thats fine about the interview no probs,

now i did email u my school email here it is XXXXXX@XXXXXX.viv.edu.au
we are school hols soon but due to moving i am flat broke so no intention of coming up for graduation (sorry)

however, if u come down to melb thats cool. I am really happy in my job its a great school but i can tell u all that in the interview.

ok let me know and have a great easter.
talk soon
XXXXXX

> At 05:25 PM 24/08/2005, you wrote:
> >Hey Denise,
> >
> >thx for the call and sorry I missed it... and i have also accidentally
> >deleted your number...
> >
> >now as for friday, i was thinking of taking the day off! I know extremely
> >naughty but i will explain when i see u why i need it! now what time are
> >you in melb? Can you call me in the morning (friday) to confirm my were
> >abouts! at this stage i haven't decided yet! I can meet u in the city and
> >we can sit in my favourite cafe or something...
> >
> >hope all is ok!?
> >talk soon
> >XXXXXX

Date: Thu, 25 Aug 2005 11:37:03 +1000
Subject: Re: Friday
To: d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au
From: XXXXXX@broadmesc.vic.edu.au

wonderful, we can organise something in the morning! at this stage i am definatly taking tomorrow off but who knows what might change! the guilts!

anyway talk in morning

XXXXXX

Date: Mon, 07 Nov 2005 09:47:15 +1100
Subject: Re: interview
To: d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au
From: "Marcel" XXXXXX@broadmesc.vic.edu.au

yeah schedule me in for when u like...
glad to hear i will be in the thesis... and yay for nearly completing my first year!
thx

XXXXXX

Date: Fri, 10 Nov 2006 09:44:33 +1100 (EST)
From: "Marcel" <XXXXXX@yahoo.com.au>
Subject: Re: Package sent
To: Denise Stanley <d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au>

Thanks package has arrived and i have started to read through it... very strange to be reading about myself... lol

will keep u posted
XXXXXX

Meret

Date: Sun, 19 Jun 2005 08:43:41 +1000

Hiya,
What about Meret Oppenheim, she's the surrealist artist who made the furry cup and saucer, a great image that switched me on to surrealism as a child. Good luck with the conference and your studies and great to hear from you. I have moved house (again) to Leichhardt, and will be around in July so have no probs with catching up then. Work wise I am relief teaching every day at XXXXX College, a boys catholic school in the eastern suburbs, its ok as a starting point.
Have a good time in Spain. Ole!
XXXXX

----- Original Message -----

From: "Meret" <XXXXXX@idx.com.au>
To: "Denise Stanley" <d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au>
Subject: Americans for the Arts
Date: Mon, 15 Aug 2005 10:23:50 +1000

Hi Denise,
Here's the website I mentioned the other night.
Thanks for including me in your project, I am getting heaps out of the interaction.
Fond regards from XXXXXXXX

www.AmericansForTheArts.org

From: "Meret" <XXXXXX@idx.com.au>
To: "Denise Stanley" <d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au>
Subject: Re: interview
Date: Mon, 7 Nov 2005 17:34:52 +1100

Hey there,
noon on monday 28th nov suits me just fine and dandy,
looking forward to seeing you then.
are you flying back to the states for a holiday or for good?
XXXXX

> At 07:13 PM 6/11/2005 +1100, you wrote:
>>
>>Hiya,
>>Wed and Thurs 23 and 24 Nov are ok with me after 5pm which is the time i
>>arrive home from work those days. on 28 and 29 i am free during the day.
>>let me know what suits,
>>XXXXX
>>
>>> At 04:58 PM 4/11/2005 +1100, you wrote:
>>>>
>>>>Hi Denise,
>>>>How about November 21 or 22?
>>>>I have a new address:
>>>>X/XXa Union St, North Sydney
>>>>You are most welcome to come here.
>>>>I am looking forward to meeting again.
>>>>XXXXX

From: "Meret" <XXXXXX@idx.com.au>
To: "Denise Stanley" <d.stanley@edfac.usyd.edu.au>
Subject: thanks!
Date: Wed, 1 Nov 2006 10:43:54 +1100

Hi Denise,
I have been reading your paper, it is fantastic!
I really like the narrative structure
and feel okay about how 'my' character is portrayed.
Thanks for all your hard work.
xxoo XXXXX

APPENDIX J

Transcript Excerpts: Participants' Reactions to Interviewing Process

The following transcripts outline direct dialogue between me (D) and each of my research participants. In these four short excerpts, the reader can 'hear,' in the words of the participants themselves, their reaction to the interviewing process throughout their first year of teaching.

Bridget

D: I would like you to reflect on the interviewing process throughout this past year – how was it for you?

B: I thought it was great!

D: What did you get out of it?

B: It's good to share thoughts about art and teaching with someone who is really interested in what you have to say. And it has also been really good for me to vent my views – I just learnt a lot – maybe it's because I had put it into words. As you know, your thoughts can often get quite jumbled – it's not until you say them out loud or write them down that you can go, "Ah! I thought about this." And it brings things up – it's just been really helpful and it's making me think about what I've done and where I am going – and that's been great.

D: Has it caused any stress at all?

B: No – I have actually been looking forward to the interviews because they have been really fun.

D: Well, I hope you enjoy reading about yourself as well.

B: I'm excited to have a chance to be a part of someone's research – because I have never had that opportunity before.

D: You're like a celebrity...

B: Yeah, I'm on the backpage of "New Idea" You can put the red carpet out for me – here comes the new art teacher!

Maggie

D: How did it feel to go through this interviewing process throughout the year?

M: Good.

D: What did you get out of it?

M: Well, it's interesting because it sort of forced reflection. I haven't kept a journal, but this has been my journal.

D: Really?

M: I know I have been repeating myself – but that is good because it shows that I am consistent. The different things that come up have been pretty consistent. It's more than just like a long, linear pattern – it's like a checkerboard. It's a pattern, things happen, there are reactions, there's action. I can see pieces of a puzzle fitting together, but there is a scheme to it – it's not just a stream of consciousness.

D: So, did vocalising that have any impact on you?

M: I guess so – it's hard to know.

D: Has it ever caused any stress?

M: No – I don't think so.

D: Reflecting back now, would you do it again?

M: Sure – yeah – and I would recommend it to others if they are the type of people that enjoy reflecting. It was definitely a reflecting experience for me.

D: Did you come to any realisations?

M: As far as it just kind of consolidates things – by verbalising it you gain benefits – And I am really looking forward to reading it – because it’s funny to see – kind of like a note in the bottle.

Marcel

D: So this will be the final interview

M: No more interviews?

D: No

M: Oh, that’s a shame

D: Why – did you like it?

M: I haven’t disliked it.

D: What has the interview process been like for you?

M: It hasn’t been too painful.

D: Has it caused any stress?

M: I thought it would have – but it didn’t. No, it hasn’t caused any problems at all.

D: Did you gain anything from the interviews?

M: A little reflection I guess in between – which is really good for a first year – or any teacher.

Meret

D: What was it like to go through the interviewing process?

M: It’s been really good to have the dialogue - you can reflect so much by yourself – but to actually need to speak about it to someone who is questioning you – it’s stimulating and interesting and it’s a reminder. You remind me that, “Oh yeah, I’m beginning something.” It’s a learning curve – and how I learn kind of thing – an opportunity to speak about it.

D: Have you come to any realisations through it?

M: Like the ones I have spoken about – it probably brought it to the front of my mind.

D: Sometimes I talk to myself just to vocalise something – it helps me make more sense out of things...

M: Yeah - and thinking about how my artwork has been affecting my teaching...

D: Are you surprised about that?

M: No - not really surprised

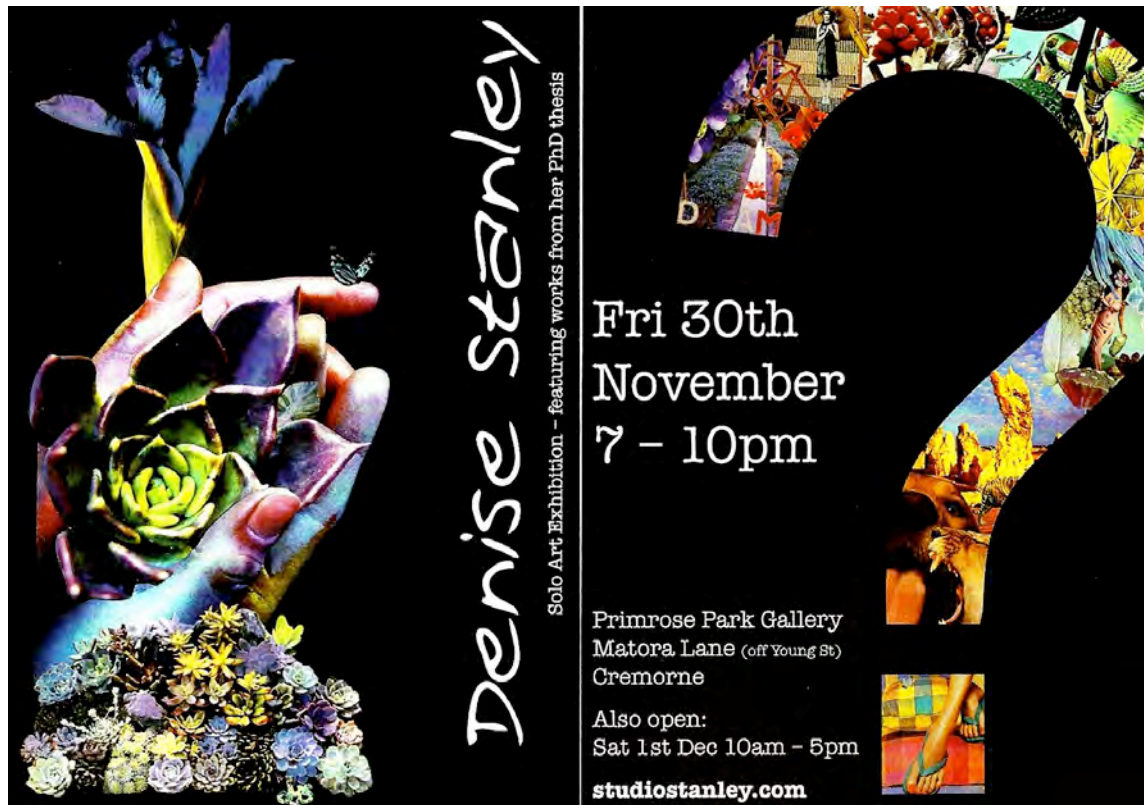
D: Thankful?

M: Yeah!

D: Has the interviewing process caused any stress on you at all?

M: No – not at all – thank God!

APPENDIX K
Art Show Artefacts



Artist Statement

Over the past four years I have portrayed through collage my identity as an American living in Australia. The photographs and graphic design in popular culture magazines have served as the inspiration towards each collage in my 2007 solo art exhibition. The artworks reflect my interests in colour, texture, nature, animals, design, fashion, art, living healthy and having a free spirit.

In 2003 I moved to Australia to attend the University of Sydney. When I was not at the computer writing my PhD thesis, I relaxed by carefully cutting selected images and then fitting them together like pieces to a puzzle. These actions allowed me the necessary space to analyse my research in relation to making art. The result of such actions provided appealing metaphors that could translate into unconventional ways. My 'personality' in each collage may capture, seduce or unsettle the viewer. Similarly, the process of living in a foreign country and writing a thesis has captured, seduced and unsettled me.

Some images you may recognise and some you may relate to, but all will ask you to look close. With the title of each collage asking a question, the viewer is encouraged to spend time contemplating an answer. The ultimate question that I ask myself is, "what do I want to do with my life?" The answer just happens to be... "this."

I hope you enjoy the art.

Denise Stanley
2007

Photos of exhibition at Primrose Park Gallery



Denise Y. Stanley – *Teaching Is My Art Now*

An article about the exhibition appeared on the front page of Sydney University's newspaper November 9, 2007



Casting a strong shadow

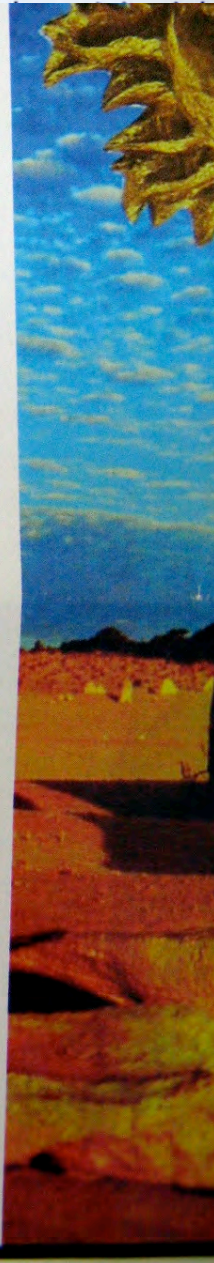
Final year PhD student Denise Stanley is an artist who likes to ask questions. In the collage pictured right, which features in a solo exhibition of her work later this month, the question being asked – and the title of the piece – is “Where’s my shadow?”

Stanley moved to Sydney from the USA in 2003 to start a postgraduate degree in visual arts education in the Faculty of Education and Social Work.

During her research she noticed a curious parallel between the process of researching and writing her PhD and her spare-time activity of making collages. Her collages have since become a part of her doctoral thesis, and will be exhibited at the Primrose Park Gallery in Cremorne at the end of the month.

Artworks from her PhD thesis will also be featured at an arts education conference at the University on the weekend of 24 November.

Stanley, who draws inspiration from photographs and graphic designs in popular magazines, won first place in the Verge Arts Festival in 2005 and 2006, and has 42 of her sculptures on permanent display in the Holme Building pleasance.



An article about the exhibition appeared in The Manly Daily on November 23, 2007 and again on November 30, 2007



The art of overachieving

MANLY'S Denise Stanley is a driven woman. She never missed a single day of school at her home in California, she's a qualified visual arts teacher presently doing a PhD on the subject and has been teaching piano since 1992.

She's also done four years of cake decorating and five years of belly dancing.

Stanley has also twice been the winner of Manly's Chalkfest competition (2004 and 2005).

And she is having an exhibition of her collage art for two days only, opening on Saturday, November 30.

"At the end of each day I assess whether I've taken advantage of my opportunities," she said. "I feel good about myself when I'm doing things."

She grew up in California but moved to Ashland, Oregon, in 1997 to escape what she called California's consumerist obsession and live a more natural life.

After moving to Australia in 2003, she took up snorkelling and decided to research the marine life in Cabbage Tree Bay. From this research she made 42 sculptures which were bought by the University of Sydney this year and are now on permanent display.

"My ideal would be to open a warehouse in Brookvale where I



Denise Stanley (left) and (above) a collage from her solo art exhibition.

could teach visual arts," she said. "It would be called Studio Stanley."

The PhD she is working on at Sydney University is called *Teaching is my Art Now: early career transition of visual arts teachers*. "I found teaching improved me as an artist," she said. "It's a common reason for artists to go into teaching for the financial security."

Stanley's work is collage. She sources a lot of the items for her designs from high-end magazines like *Vogue*. "Cutting out is quite meditative for me," she said.

"My collage may capture, seduce or unsettle the viewer. Living in another country and writing a thesis has captured, seduced and unsettled me."

She is in Australia with husband Jeff, also an overachiever, who made the final 12 in auditions as a lead guitarist for the Red Hot Chili Peppers. He was forced to miss because of commitments to church.

Stanley's exhibition is at Primrose Park Gallery, Matora Lane (off Young St), Cremorne on Friday, November 30, 7-10pm and Saturday, December 1, 10am-5pm.

