The ABC's of Art Teacher Professional Identity: An A/r/tographic Investigation into the Interstitial Spaces

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The ABC’s of Art Teacher Professional Identity: An A/r/tographic Investigation into the Interstitial Spaces

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
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Abstract

Teachers are more than teachers, however, they do not often discuss, define or identify their multiple professional identities they possess. Likewise, society narrowly perceives and categorizes the conception of teacher, and disregards practices teachers perform that do not fit neatly into established constructs within the profession. This research study explores the multiple professional identities of teachers, specifically art teachers, to understand how they perceive themselves as professionals, and furthermore, to investigate what happens when professional identities intersect, overlap, and create hybrid spaces. Teacher professional identity, multiple identity, intersectionality, and developmental evolution of self are key constructs within this research.

To study the spaces between professional identities, a/r/tography was used as the primary research methodology, which allowed for openings and inquiry into interstitial space. Fourteen art teachers participated as group participants and five were studied in more depth on an individual level. Participants created metaphorical representations and engaged in dialogue about their professional identities as well as shared artifacts from their teaching practice.

Findings from the study were rendered using Surrealist devices, in keeping with the framework that art and writing, visual and literal depictions, are necessary to evaluate
the complexity of this topic. There were four major themes revealed in the data, which encompass the misnaming of objects, hybridity and heterotopias, paradoxical relationships, and successful crossings between identities. Additionally, Kegan’s (1982) developmental theory underpins the participant’s reflections and an ABC model of identity was created to highlight and quantify the intersections. In sum, there are blurry, boundless spaces within teacher professional identity that cannot be categorized and are not attended to in the literature. Participants accounted for feelings of heightened ability, intuition, and flow when they were able to positively intersect their multiple professional identities in their work, and this points to an area of research that is both cutting edge and needs more study.
Acknowledgements

“I have found a new potential inherent in things—their ability to gradually become something else. This seems to me to be something quite different from a composite object, since there is no break between the two substances.”

- René Magritte

(as cited in Esaak, n.d.)

To achieve great things and go far requires more than one individual’s effort. This accomplishment would not have been realized without the support of my friends, colleagues, professors, and many others from all walks of life. To those of you who knew me during this journey, know that your voice was with me throughout this process (especially on those late nights working alone on my computer), and I am forever grateful.

Additionally, this work would not be complete without a special acknowledgement to my mother. I have to credit my incredible mother for her firm and steady belief in my potential. By telling me “when you get your doctorate” instead of “if you get your doctorate,” she planted a vision of my future, and it feels amazing to celebrate this milestone with her.
# Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1  
Multiple Professional Identities and Intersectionality .............................................................. 2  
Rationale for the Study .............................................................................................................. 4  
Personal Interest as the Researcher .......................................................................................... 6  
Research Questions ................................................................................................................ 7  
Methodology and Data Analysis .............................................................................................. 8  
Selection of Participants ......................................................................................................... 10  
Data Collection ........................................................................................................................ 10  
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................. 11  

Chapter Two: Literature Review ............................................................................................... 13  
Formation and Development of Identity and Teacher Identity ............................................... 15  
   Framing Identity ..................................................................................................................... 15  
   Framing Teacher Identity ....................................................................................................... 17  
Construction and Negotiation of Teacher Professional Identity ............................................. 19  
   General Research on Teacher Professional Identity ............................................................. 21  
   Teacher Professional Identity as Perceived by Research and Society .................................. 22  
   Teacher Professional Identity as Perceived by Teachers ....................................................... 23  
Developmental Stages of Teacher Professional Identities ....................................................... 26  
Considerations and Challenges of Multiple Professional Identities ........................................ 31  
   Considerations of Multiple Professional Identities ................................................................. 32  
   Challenges of Multiple Professional Identities ...................................................................... 36  
Intersections of Teacher Professional Identities ........................................................................ 39  
   Background of Intersectionality ............................................................................................ 41  
   Interdisciplinarity of Intersectionality .................................................................................... 42  
   Intersections as Convergent, Transformational, and Translational Points ....................... 44  
   Stories of Self Reveal Intersections ....................................................................................... 47  
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................. 49  

Chapter Three: Methodology ................................................................................................... 52  
Uncovering the Intersections and Revealing Identity through Art and Writing ....................... 52  
   A/r/tography ........................................................................................................................ 52  
   Portraiture ............................................................................................................................. 53  
   Surrealist Devices .................................................................................................................. 56  
   Kegan’s Developmental Evolution of Self ............................................................................. 57  
   Metaphorical Representations ............................................................................................... 58  
   Renderings of Relational Inquiry ......................................................................................... 59  
Research Questions and Study Design ..................................................................................... 61  
   Group Participants ................................................................................................................. 62  
   Individual Participants ......................................................................................................... 63
Chapter Four: Findings from the Spaces In Between

1. Tom Abbott ................................................................. 98
   Portrait of Tom .......................................................... 98
   Defining Tom’s Professional Identity ................................ 102
   Intersections of Tom’s Professional Identities .................. 103
   Renderings ............................................................... 106
   Conclusion ............................................................... 108

2. Allison Hagan .............................................................. 109
   Portrait of Allison ..................................................... 109
   Defining Allison’s Professional Identity .......................... 112
   Intersections of Allison’s Professional Identities ............... 116
   Renderings ............................................................... 121
   Conclusion ............................................................... 123

3. Ingrid Kent ................................................................. 124
   Portrait of Ingrid ........................................................ 124
   Defining Ingrid’s Professional Identity ............................ 128
   Intersections of Ingrid’s Professional Identities ............... 132
   Renderings ............................................................... 137
   Conclusion ............................................................... 138

4. Nicole Falls ................................................................. 139
   Portrait of Nicole ........................................................ 139
   Defining Nicole’s Professional Identity ............................ 143
   Intersections of Nicole’s Professional Identities ............... 145
   Renderings ............................................................... 151
   Conclusion ............................................................... 152

5. Nancy Dover ............................................................... 153
   Portrait of Nancy ........................................................ 153
   Defining Nancy’s Professional Identity ............................ 156
   Intersections of Nancy’s Professional Identities ............... 161
   Renderings ............................................................... 168
   Conclusion ............................................................... 169

Summary ........................................................................... 170
Chapter Five: Thematics, Evaluations, and Implications ............................................ 176
Overview of the Study ............................................................................................. 176
The ABC’s of Professional Identity: Defining the Intersections .................................... 181
What Happens in the Interstitial Space? .................................................................... 184
Discussion of Themes .............................................................................................. 188
  1. This Is Not A Pipe: Words Are Arbitrary Points of Meaning ................................. 188
  2. Collective Invention: Hybrids and Heterotopia ..................................................... 193
  3. Empire of Light: Paradoxical Relationships .......................................................... 199
  4. The Victory: Successfully Crossing One’s Professional Identities ....................... 206
Developmental Continuum of Professional Identity and Interstitial Identity ............. 211
  Developing the Strength to Work in the Interstitial Spaces ...................................... 214
Significance for Education in General ....................................................................... 216
Implications and Further Research .......................................................................... 219
Closing Comments .................................................................................................... 224
References .................................................................................................................. 228
Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Individual Participants ....................................... 240
Appendix B: Metaphorical Representations Created by Group Participants ................ 243
Appendix C: Individual Participant Teaching Artifact ............................................... 254
Appendix D: Table of Surrealist Devices .................................................................. 255
Appendix E: Kegan’s Framework .............................................................................. 256
Figures

Figure 1. Le Blanc-Seing. Rene Magritte. 1965. Oil. ................................................................. 47
Figure 2. Group participants in small group activity. ............................................................. 82
Figure 3. Metaphorical representation of professional identity created by a group participant. ............................................................................................................................... 87
Figure 4. Metaphorical representation of professional identity by group participant. Exterior and interior perspectives. ........................................................................................................ 90
Figure 5. Photography by Tom for his BFA thesis exhibition............................................. 105
Figure 6. Allison's studio space .......................................................................................... 111
Figure 7. Examples of Allison’s Imaginary Friend artwork. .............................................. 119
Figure 8. Teaching artifact created by Allison representing a student reflection worksheet, front side and back side. ...................................................................................... 121
Figure 9. Ingrid's lesson planning book. ............................................................................ 134
Figure 10. The ABC Model of Professional Identity: Three identities intersecting compared to four identities intersecting. (Berk, 2015) ........................................ 183
Figure 11. Aggregation of participant feedback of what they experience in the interstitial spaces of their professional identities ........................................................................... 186
Figure 12. Ceci n’est pas une pipe (This is Not a Pipe). René Magritte. Oil on canvas. 1948........................................... ................................................................. 188
Figure 13. L’Invention Collective (Collective Invention). René Magritte. 1935. ............ 193
Figure 14. L'Empire des Lumieres (Empire of Light). René Magritte. Oil on canvas. 1953. ................................................................................................................................. 199
Figure 15. La Victoire (The Victory). René Magritte. Oil on canvas. 1939..................... 206
Figure 16. Continuum of conceptions of professional identity created from participant data .......................................................................................................................... 212
Figure 18. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant. ....................... 243
Figure 19. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant. ....................... 244
Figure 20. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant. ....................... 245
Figure 21. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant. ....................... 246
Figure 22. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant. ....................... 247
Figure 23. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant. ....................... 248
Figure 24. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant. ....................... 249
Figure 25. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant. ....................... 250
Figure 26. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant. ....................... 251
Figure 27. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant. ....................... 252
Figure 28. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant. ....................... 253
Figure 29. Teaching artifact of a rubric created by Nancy Dover. ................................... 254
Chapter One: Introduction

Imagine this scenario: a group of amateur photographers flock to the Grand Canyon, eager to photograph the landmark. With mental images of what the Grand Canyon is, the photographers look for the right spot from which to capture the legendary location. Instead of seeing the limitless possibilities and searching for perspectives that are meaningful for them, the photographers focus on representing the Grand Canyon in exactly the same way as thousands of photographers before them have, sustaining a singular vantage point of the infamous canyon (Langer, 1989). Needless to say, this scenario illustrates how society frequently retains and perpetuates one-dimensional representations of ideas, objects, and experiences.

As this study will attest, research on teacher identity and how to define identity is a challenging task because it is a complex topic. To fully investigate teacher identity, the research must disorient existing structures and unpack what lies beneath the surface of and in between formal categories of identity (Irwin, 2004). Once this occurs and identities are unbound from socially organized strata, multiplicity is revealed and a constellation of overlapping and interlocking professional identities is found to exist within each individual. Hence, teacher identity is one of a series of professional identities, and when other professional identities are woven into teacher identity, it influences and informs how a teacher teaches (Berk, 2015).
Multiple Professional Identities and Intersectionality

For this research, professional identity is considered any identity through which an individual could or does earn an income or ascribes to in their place of work. Only in the past decade has research on teacher professional identity emerged as its own area of research (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004), yet teacher professional identity still lacks a clear definition across the literature (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000). Chapter two will go into more detail on identity research and further explain intersectionality, a recent concept in the literature that accounts for multiple, simultaneous systems of identity.

Multiple professional identities and intersectionality are two key concepts to this research. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) describe that while teacher professional identity is inconsistent among researchers, there are critical factors that comprise teacher professional identity. These factors include the conceptions and expectations of others as well as teacher self-image, meaning the way teachers see themselves as teachers, what they value and find important in their work, and the attitudes and beliefs teachers have about teaching.

Older scholarship on identity primarily focused on identity as a concept of self, stemming from a one-dimensional viewpoint that identity formed through a set of developmental stages (Erikson, 1950). Prior research also emphasized individual traits such as feminist identity or black identity as it coincided with social movements (Reynolds & Pope, 1991). Contemporary research supports that identity is not a stable or fixed entity (Beijaard et al., 2004), but rather shifts depending on context and evolves.
over time, which means that individuals may have multiple identities and identity is a multi-dimensional concept.

Individuals ascribe to many types of identities. Reynolds and Pope (1991) state, “Nature does not create discrete categories of human traits or identities” (p. 175), and people live on the edges of social identifiers, belonging to multiple affiliations (Josselson & Harway, 2012). Irwin (2004) refers to this concept as those who live in the borderlands. I believe art teachers are inhabitants of borderlands, places where people are “re-thinking, re-living, and re-making the terms of their identities as they confront difference and similarity” (p. 29). Certainly these qualities occur in the classroom, as teachers work with varying populations of students and negotiate their roles and job responsibilities.

When discussing multiple identities, the concept of intersectionality applies because it studies how systems of privilege and oppression are interconnected. In the 1980s, intersectionality emerged as a theoretical framework in the field of law to reconcile the interactions that reside among gender, race, and class (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). This is because it became evident that, for instance, a black woman of poverty represents three assigned social categories, and she should be recognized in all dimensions to describe her social position. Intersectionality contextualizes a person and how he or she is shaped by his or her various identities. By exploring categorical complexities within a teacher’s professional identity (McCall, 2005), the intersections become a framework for rethinking how a teacher’s professional identities interact with and (re)define his or her other professional identities.
Rationale for the Study

While teacher professional identity has gained more popularity in recent literature (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004), the relationships between art educators’ multiple professional identities and how they impact teaching practices has not been thoroughly studied. The landscape of professional identity is shifting, and professionals realize that there is significance in explicitly stating multiple professional identities as well as recognizing that individuals may play more than one role in an organization or within their professional life. Consider for a moment the business card. In the past few years, I have received business cards containing two or three different titles beneath a person’s name such as director and developer or co-founder and CEO. These titles denote how a person is assigned to different professional identities. Similarly, a singular job title, such as teacher, minimizes the breadth of one’s professional identities to a singular idea, failing to express other dimensions of professional identity.

Scholars suggest that it is within the intersecting spaces of disciplines where unexpected and often the most innovative practices arise (Lehrer, 2012b) because insights result as a consequence of connecting that which is similar and dissimilar. Hence, intersections are where hybrid ideas emerge, those spaces where ideas synthesize and blend together into more than one thing. For education, this implies that when teachers converge teacher identity with at least one other professional identity, then an overlap of professional identities is created. Inside this intersection, there lies the potential for a novel or innovative practice in teaching to be produced. In which case, it begs the question, what manifests in the intersections of professional identities? If teacher identity
is crossed with another professional identity, then what is the subsequent result, and what does it mean for that person’s teaching practice? This study sets out to investigate these questions.

This research investigates the complexities that comprise art teacher professional identity, and furthermore what emerges within the intersections between one’s teacher identity and other professional identities. Based on my review of the literature, I suggest that art teachers who are aware of and make use of their multiple professional identities are more inclined to produce rich learning opportunities and rich environments for their students (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejeda, 1999). I presume this notion to be true based on my own experiences as an art teacher where my teaching practice was inspired and informed by my other professional identities.

I narrow this research to focus solely on professional identities, those identities that one ascribes to in his or her workplace or from which a person could or does earn an income, since the topic of identity is extensive and broad, including many types of personal and social identities such as mother, friend, Christian, and so forth (Jones & McEwen, 2000). While personal and social associations fundamentally comprise a person’s overall identity, I believe that teacher professional identity in and of itself deserves more study to reveal the subtleties and nuances embedded within it. Thus, my research is an inquiry into what additional professional identities an art teacher performs or ascribes to besides one who teaches, and how these other professional identities effect and inform his or her practices in teaching.

The intersections between the professional identities of art teachers is an area of research that has not been thoroughly explored, and it warrants attention. Labeling
teachers only as teachers disregards how they cross boundaries and what arises in the
interstitial spaces of teaching. While common perceptions of a teacher’s role concern
pedagogical expertise, content knowledge, and classroom management (Ball, Thames, &
Phelps, 2008; Beijaard et al., 2000) and, in many cases, the deliverer of knowledge
(Dillabough, 1999), I argue that this is a one-dimensional definition and explanation of
teaching, and in fact, a teacher’s professional identities are layered, fluid, and complex.
Since innovation occurs from acts of recombination and transposition (Lehrer, 2012b),
the same holds true when professional identities collide. Therefore, research needs to
take into account other spaces of teacher identity such as liminalities (Sameshima &
Irwin, 2009), or ambiguities, within the profession in order to acknowledge that elements
of teaching cannot be placed into straightforward categories.

**Personal Interest as the Researcher**

As a former art teacher, I am familiar with navigating the tension between my
artist identity and my teacher identity in the classroom. For me, these identities are
intertwined, requiring a delicate balance in order to communicate to my students the
properties and concepts of art alongside its processes and techniques. Inwardly, I
embraced both of these professional identities in the classroom, even though outwardly,
my students and colleagues predominantly perceived me as a teacher.

Later as I transitioned my career in education from teacher to administrator, I
realized that I ascribe to many professional identities including being a teacher, a
researcher, a program coordinator, and a designer. Times when I feel most conflicted
about my professional identity are those when I attend conferences or professional
events. In these circumstances, I often struggle in terms of how to introduce myself,
knowing it is the social norm to only use one professional identity, yet it often feels false and inauthentic to position myself merely as one type of professional.

Additionally, I noticed that my professional identities collide, crossover, and support one another. It is important to note that given the job or situation, I tend to promote a central professional identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011) and allow my other professional identities to be subsidiary, as if hibernating, never entirely disappearing. For instance, when my teacher identity is central, my graphic designer identity pays attention to visual design and layout, my researcher identity validates sources and documents processes, and my program coordinator identity integrates outside resources to use in curricula. These are just some of the intersections I am aware of in my teaching practice. Likewise, the reverse is true that I adapt practices from my teaching and apply them to my other professional identities. As I came to realize the overlaps and intersections within my professional identity, it occurred to me that my professional identity is fuzzy and rhizomatic (Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008), not always belonging to one field and certainly bending the boundaries of what is considered formal. In turn, this epiphany caused me to wonder about how other art teachers perceive themselves as professionals, and what types of intersections they experience in their professional identities.

**Research Questions**

Art teachers, like all professionals, construct their own set of professional self-categorizations, some ascribed and some assigned, but in either case, a teacher is more than a teacher, and this merits examination of what constitutes a teacher’s professional identity. The questions that guide this research are:
1) How do art teachers define *professional identity*?

2) To what professional identities do art teachers ascribe to or self-assign, aside from being a teacher?

3) What novel, hybrid, or innovative practices occur in or as a result of the intersections of art teachers’ professional identities?

**Methodology and Data Analysis**

First, for the purposes of this research, the term teacher and educator will be used interchangeably. Even though the research questions are stated above, these are prefigured foci and the primary research questions may emerge at the conclusion of the research process (Eisner 1991). To study this phenomenon, a/r/tography is the primary methodology because it is an arts-based method that purposefully explores the in-between. The term a/r/tography recognizes artist/researcher/teacher identities along with art and graphy (meaning writing) as a way of disrupting binaries and reimagining concepts embedded within traditional models of theory and practice (Irwin, 2013). In a/r/tography, relations to other concepts and ideas are valued in order to portray relationality, which opens up spaces within professional identities through visual and linguistic findings. It also emphasizes inquiry and interdisciplinarity to uncover deep meaning (Pinar, 2004) as well as involves art and writing as tools to examine creative practices and dualities between disciplines. Since teaching art is itself a nonlinguistic practice, it is beneficial to use a research methodology that embraces creative, visual, and nonverbal elements as data.

For the data analysis, a/r/tography synthesizes findings into renderings, or themes, but does not portend a set structure of what the renderings should be (R. Irwin personal
communication November 26, 2013). For this reason, devices used by surrealist artists are integrated into the data analysis since it is an art form that questions reality and the subconscious and likewise used art and writing to reveal conditions within society. Devices such as displacement, juxtaposition, and condensation are just a few of the ways surrealists re-examined concepts, and therefore, these same devices will be used to render the data.

Furthermore, the literature supports that identity forms over time and aligns with developmental life stages. To support this aspect of the conceptual framework of teacher professional identity, Kegan’s (1982/1994) theory of the evolution of self will apply to the final thematics and evaluation of findings in chapter five. Even though a person may have multiple professional identities that intersect, a person will grow into her professional identities at different times, and this is an important point to reflect upon in the analysis.

Ultimately, this research project will become a combined act of an artist/researcher/teacher engaging in art, research, and writing, a process that is reflective, reflexive, recursive, and responsive (Irwin, 2004). As an artist/researcher/teacher, I will study the professional identities of other art teachers who may or may not consider themselves to be artist/researcher/teachers, but perhaps some other combination. I approach this work as a “dialectical relationship between categories of thought” (Irwin, 2004, p. 2) instead of a dichotomy of separateness, and as the researcher, I have experience working in the spaces in between my artist, researcher, and teacher identities.
Selection of Participants

There were two forms of participation in this study, group participants and individual participants. Participants for this study are members of a local art educator group in a large urban city in the western United States. This art educator group has been in existence for three years and is comprised of approximately 20 members from various K-20 public and private schools across the city. The members attend monthly meetings throughout the school year on weekday evenings to converse and share knowledge about their practice and about contemporary art. Fourteen members of the group agreed to participate in the group study, and of those, four additionally agreed to be part of a more in-depth individual study.

For the individual participants, five art teachers were studied in depth, four of them are currently members of the art educator group, and the fifth person is a former member of the group and was referred to me by an existing member. The five individual participants represent a range of ages, teaching experience, gender, race, and professional backgrounds, which provides a spectrum of professional art teacher identity.

Data Collection

Over the course of four months, I collected data for this study. Data was collected in artistic, linguistic, and textual forms. The group participants made visual representations of how they perceived their professional identities, mostly as magazine collages or small sculptural objects. The group participants discussed their creations in small group and full group discussion activities, and these sessions were audio and video recorded for analysis. Also, the participants completed a five-question questionnaire to further explain and document the ideas embedded within their visual representations.
For the five individual participants, each person was interviewed twice for at least an hour each time, and they were observed while teaching a class. An interview protocol was used for the first interview, but the second interview questions were crafted after reviewing the audio from the first interview. A field notebook was used to record observations and reflections during this process. The participants also submitted artifacts of their teaching including resumes, lesson plans, rubrics, handouts, and student work. I took photographs of each art teacher’s classroom and school spaces to capture layout, visual aids, and other items that represent her professional workplace.

**Conclusion**

The rationale for this research project is to explore acts of teaching that occur amidst and between the relationships of a teacher’s multiple professional identities, something I have experienced myself. I have encountered a lack of literature that discusses the multiple professional identities of teachers, and more specifically, any literature that details how multiple identities are performed by teachers, how teachers perceive themselves as professionals in addition to the title of teacher, and what happens in the intersections of teacher professional identity. What follows in this study are the detailed stories of five art teachers, along with the thoughts of 14 art teachers, about what professional identity means to them and how they perceive their different professional identities at play in their work as art teachers. A/r/tography promotes inquiry into the complementary, conflicting, and enhancing qualities of phenomena, leading to “aesthetic experience that integrates knowing, doing, and making” (Irwin, 2004, p. 31). A/r/tography, combined with the devices of surrealist artists and Kegan’s (1982) evolution of self, supports the evaluation of teacher professional identity and begins to
elicit what exists within the intersections. By opening up the interstitial spaces of teaching, research can explore and further question what it means to be a teacher and how and why a teacher performs her work in the way that she does.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

“There are no single trees, only the forest, a protective layer, one vast web of unfathomable interconnection” (Thomashow, 1995, p. 201).

As art teachers must abide political and social pressures to perform as highly qualified, skilled, and effective teachers who use best instructional practices (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2010; RAND, 2007), it is critical to study the professional identities of art teachers and how those professional identities intersect in the workplace. At the intersections of art teachers’ professional identities, the physical, psychological, spiritual, social, geographical, and pedagogical (Irwin, 2004) interweave, tense, alter, combine, and create unique practices. Examining interstitial space and the resulting hybrid practices within teacher professional identity provides insights into the teaching profession, making it a richer landscape by analyzing its intercategorical complexities and further questioning the qualities, behaviors, and traits that comprise teaching.

In recent literature, teacher identity has become a separate area of research (Beijaard et al., 2004), and discussions regarding multiplicity of teacher identities are also becoming common (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Additionally, the theory of intersectionality has expanded in usage, being applied across disciplines to studies outside of race, class, and gender (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Dhamoon, 2011). These factors point to an interest in and a need to study how teachers perceive their
professional identities and to what extent multiple professional identities intersect and impact pedagogy and curricula.

To study the meaning and impact of the multiple professional identities of art educators, the conceptions of teacher professional identity, identity formation and evolution, multiple identities, and intersectionality must be considered. This is a logical progression I assembled in order to move the argument from teacher identity to multiplicity of identity to the intersections between identities. This process builds the analysis from singular categories to boundless states.

This literature review explores five assumptions of teacher professional identity, which are (a) the formation and development of an individual’s identity and teacher identity is contextual, relational, fluid, multiple, and storied (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Rodgers & Scott, 2008); (b) professional identity resides among a person’s many other social and personal identity associations, it is constructed and negotiated in the workplace, and it is defined through personal and social perceptions; (c) teachers perceive their professional identity differently at different points of their careers, according to a constructivist-developmental stage theory (Kegan, 1982/1994); (d) teachers possess multiple professional identities, but challenges to and considerations of what this means and how this should be studied must be taken into account; and (e) in order to explain and examine how teachers’ professional identities are performed in the classroom, the theory of intersectionality plays a significant part (Dillabough, 1999; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López & Tejada, 1999; McCall, 2005). The following sections will provide more detail on each of the five assumptions.
Formation and Development of Identity and Teacher Identity

Before discussing teacher professional identity, it is necessary to first frame identity and teacher identity. As stated by Vignoles, Schwartz, and Luyckx (2011), identity is a person’s explicit and implicit response to the question, “Who are you?” (p. 2). Identity is not a singular idea, though it is separate from the self (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). To have an identity crisis, a person feels lost, unable to connect the self to meaningful objects, people, or ideas that are sources of identity (Thomashow, 1996, p. 3). In the literature, teacher identity and teacher professional identity are separate but related concepts, and each deserves its own discussion.

Framing Identity

Identity is complex and can account for personal constructions, social constructions, or constructions that are discovered over time (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Rodgers and Scott (2008) argue that contemporary conceptions of identity pertain to four areas, which include the notions that (a) identity is dependent and formed from multiple contexts, (b) identity is formed through relations with others, (c) identity is constantly shifting and multiple, and (d) identity is about constructing meaning through stories (p. 733). Consequently, identity is contextual, relational, fluid, multiple, and storied according to the literature.

Rodgers and Scott (2008) also make an important distinction between the self and identity. They distinguish the self as “an evolving historical unity that can be seen as the meaning-maker or storyteller,” whereas identities are “the stories being told or the meaning made” (as cited in Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 311). In other words, identity is a socially constructed version of the self. This suggests that identity represents how an
individual makes sense of one’s self, activities, and interests (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). It is by performing one’s identity everyday that society is able to justify one person’s similarities to and differences from other another. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) describe identity formation as a process that involves knowledge-building alongside individual and collective integration of what is potentially relevant.

Upon examining the literature, there is evidence that identity is a dynamic, fluid continuum that can be stable or constantly changing (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Past research proclaimed identity was a fixed entity, but that is no longer the contemporary viewpoint. While identity may seem stable, it is agreed that it changes over time, more akin to a continuum of self. Developmentalists posit that people do not stay the same over the course of their lives and undergo systematic changes within “physical, cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics” (Ford & Lerner, 1992, p.84) making people somewhat different at different points of their lifetime. Moreover, identity consists of human biology coupled with the shaping of social roles in response to the social institutions in which humans live (Ford & Lerner, 1992).

People use their identity as a way to cross boundaries and obtain multimembership in different groups giving rise to coexisting identities and stories of their self (Wenger, 2010). Wenger (2010) suggests that by belonging to many communities, no matter if they are past, current, or peripheral, “it contributes in some way to the production of our identities” (p. 137) because people are reconciling and experiencing participation in various communities, which collectively creates one’s identity. For instance, one’s work life is connected to one’s home life; a parent does not cease to be a parent when they go to work. Although performed in separate locations,
identities cross over when a person reflects ideas or actions from another part of her life experiences, and this is considered multimembership. These pieces of identity continuously interweave, making identity more than a singular entity but something formed from belonging to multiple groups (Wenger, 2010).

To that end, this research supports the view that identity is not developed systematically nor is it one-dimensional. Instead, it is a multidimensional system that shifts over time as a result of interactions between the professional and his or her environment (Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1994). Identity is also significantly “constructed, maintained, and negotiated through language and discourse” (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005, p. 23), implying that social relationships shape one’s sense of identity because human development involves reciprocal relationships. Likewise, teacher identity does not develop or proceed in a linear path; it is rhizomatic in structure (Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong, & Bickel, 2008), and this will be addressed in the next section.

**Framing Teacher Identity**

Starting with an historical perspective to frame teacher identity, in the early twentieth century, Palmer (1910) asked the following rhetorical question regarding the teaching profession, “What special qualifications will the work require?” (p. 7). He goes on to suggest that no precise answer can be returned because ultimately “there is no human excellence which is not useful for us teachers” (Palmer, 1910, p. 7). Palmer (1910) likens teaching to a serious and difficult fine art because there are so many ways to teach. It is almost impossible to name the qualifications a teacher should demonstrate since any seem suitable. Palmer (1910) embraces teaching as the noblest profession that
essentially revolves around the craft of absorption. He believes teaching requires many talents if one is to endure and be successful and effective at it.

Similarly, Shulman (1987) reinforces that teaching is about knowing something that is not understood by others, and through speaking, listening, showing, and experiencing, the teacher discerns the unknown so that students can comprehend it. It is the teacher who determines what is to be learned and how best it should be taught. Furthermore, Shulman (1987) emphasizes that while there is a “core conception of teaching, it is also an incomplete conception” (p. 7), implying that teaching is complicated, yet people are quick to assume they know what it is supposed to be. Eisner (1996) points out that teaching is the only profession whose socialization begins at age five. This reminds us that, as a society, we believe we know what it means to be a teacher since most everyone has attended school, but society often neglects and oversimplifies many of the complexities of the teaching profession.

Given these viewpoints from the aforementioned scholars, teacher identity is a complex topic in itself. Before unpacking teacher professional identity, it is helpful to contextualize teacher identity. There is growing interest in research on teacher identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011), but the literature lacks a clear definition of what constitutes teacher identity (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Therefore, the question shifts from not just what does it mean to be a teacher, but “Who am I as a teacher? And who do I want to become?” (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 308), as well as “Who am I in this moment?” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108). Directing questions back to the teacher and asking for her perspective on who she thinks she is as a professional is considered the
best way to research teacher identity because the teacher becomes the source, not the theories or literatures.

Scholars postulate that defining teacher identity is the primary difficulty in understanding how teacher identity influences teachers’ work and learning (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). According to Akkerman and Meijer (2011), the recurring themes in the literature on teacher identity development include multiplicity of identity, discontinuity of identity, and the social nature of identity. This is because much research primarily looks at teachers as objects, something seen from above as opposed to allowing teachers to make sense of her self (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011).

Akkerman and Meijer (2011) adopt a dialogical approach to studying teacher identity and state that teacher identity is, “both unitary and multiple, both continuous and discontinuous, and both individual and social” (p. 309). These opposing stances frame their dialogical approach because they expound that modern and pre-modern identity theories should not be replaced but reconceptualized with postmodern views. From this, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) assert that the formation of teacher identity is a result of a negotiation of “multiple positions in relation to a teacher’s self” (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 317), suggesting that teachers shape and re-shape their identities through contexts and collaborative exchanges with peers, inferring that relationships constitute a key component of teacher identity. This leads to a discussion on what constitutes teacher professional identity.

Construction and Negotiation of Teacher Professional Identity

Teacher professional identity has emerged as its own area of research, yet it is described differently among researchers. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) note that
some studies describe the formation of teacher professional identity as stemming from the teacher’s self-concept or self-image, with the self-image strongly determining “the way teachers teach, the way they develop as teachers, and their attitudes toward educational changes” (p. 108). Although, other studies describe the formation of teacher professional identity as what teachers should know and be able to do compared to how teachers self-reflect, especially through professional development (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Consequently, the literature, societal expectations, and the teacher’s own perceptions of his or her work are integral to understanding teacher professional identity, and this results in varying definitions. One of the most straightforward explanations is by Sachs’ (2001), who says teacher professional identity is:

> A set of attributes that are imposed upon the teaching profession either by outsiders or members of the teaching fraternity itself. It provides a shared set of attributes, values and so on that enable the differentiation of one group from another. (p. 153)

Furthermore, Trent (2010) adds that teacher professional identity is created and recreated as teachers move through their journey of learning how to teach.

Research on teaching as a profession emphasizes three areas of teaching, which are “craft knowledge, practical knowledge, and content knowledge” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 749), which is a tight conceptualization that neglects the multifaceted nature of being a teacher. While literature on teacher professional identity makes reference to teacher identity being multiple, absent are the detailed discussions and examinations of multiplicity in teacher professional identity, aside from obvious and explicit forms of teaching. Due to this discord, the next section discusses the general literature of what teacher professional identity entails, and then examines the two sides of how teachers
perceive their own professional identity alongside how society perceives the professional identity of teachers.

**General Research on Teacher Professional Identity**

Teacher professional identity is negotiated and formed in the workplace, in connection with personal identity, and is multifaceted in terms of sociology, psychology, and culture (Cooper & Olson, 1996). It may also consist of multi-membership within an institution (Dorrington, 2011; Wenger, 2010) because the collaborative exchanges teachers have with colleagues “constitute key actors in teachers’ formation of professional identity” (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 311). This implies that teacher professional identity is an unstable, ongoing entity (Coldron & Smith, 1999) where the teacher navigates personal and professional identifications in a process that is constantly renegotiated and redefined (Beijaard et al., 2004). Ostensibly, there are multiple aspects of a teacher’s professional identity, and each teacher constructs his or her own professional identity as a result of the above-mentioned areas.

The construction of teacher professional identity requires recognition of one’s self, the storyteller (Rodgers & Scott, 2008), since this makes meaning of one’s identities, but also it requires the integration of many knowledge sources (Beijaard et al., 2004). Because identity formation is a process of committing to and rejecting identities throughout one’s lifetime—writing the stories of one’s life—then, at a minimum, a teacher’s professional identity encompasses knowledge of “affect, teaching, human relations, and subject matter” (Antonek, McCormick, & Donato, 1997 as cited in Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 114). In sum, teacher professional identity is who a teacher is in the
workplace, not just in the classroom, and there are other identities involved aside from subject matter expert and pedagogical expert.

**Teacher Professional Identity as Perceived by Research and Society**

Job titles are an example of how society labels people’s work and creates fixed categories in the workplace of what constitutes professional identity (Langer, 1989). Although professionals may be assigned a specific job title and a job description, nonetheless, research expounds that professional identity is a collection of professional competencies, behaviors, beliefs, and self-perceptions (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Milbrandt & Klein, 2008; Rosenblatt, 2001) that go beyond society’s perceptions. As a teacher’s professional identity evolves along his or her career path, he or she will doubtlessly encounter a plethora of boundary-crossing experiences that include building an allegiance between modern educational discourse and compliance with the demands of educational institutions (Trent, 2013).

Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermut (2004), modeled their work on teacher professional identity after the work of Bromme (1991), who claimed “teachers derive their professional identity from (mostly combinations of) the ways they see themselves as subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, and didactical experts” (p. 750). These claims became three factors in their research, and beneath these factors, a teacher’s biography, context, and experience were considered as categories of influence on the factors. They conducted a quantitative and qualitative study of 80 secondary school teachers’ perceptions of professional identity. The findings from this study showed that teachers equally agreed or disagreed on how they perceived the three factors in their
professional identity, and these factors were seen as very important to a teacher’s professional identity.

Interestingly in the study, the category of relevant learning experiences revealed the most difference among teacher participants (Beijaard et al., 2004). It was unclear how learning experiences in subject matter, didactical, and pedagogical areas over the course of one’s teaching career affected a teacher’s perceptions of his or her professional identity. Even though this study depicts three factors of teacher professional identity, Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt (2004) agree that it is necessary to further research how teachers perceive themselves, and how the three factors influence teacher’s judgments and behaviors. In all likelihood, there are other factors, or in terms of this research, other identities, that are equally impactful yet neglected in the existing research on teacher professional identity.

It is ultimately up to the teacher to determine for herself what her professional identity is and what it means. Neissen, Abma, Widdershoven, van der Vleuten, and Akkerman (2008) concur that it is also the epistemological make-up of teachers that influence their professional work. Epistemology plays a role in research on teacher professional identity because it is interwoven with how teachers interact with colleagues, students, and their work environment, referencing the inter- and intracategorical nature of research on teacher professional identity.

**Teacher Professional Identity as Perceived by Teachers**

Milbrandt and Klein (2008) developed an electronic survey called the *NAEA* (National Art Education Association) *Higher Education Demographics, Interests, and Needs Assessment* to gather data on what aspects of identity were most important to art
educators in higher education. Their survey collected data from Higher Education Division members as to their credentials, practices, and concerns in the field of art education. There were 100 full participants, 24% of the total Listserv membership, and the art educator participants ranked their perceptions of their institution’s highly valued activities. On the survey, participants were specifically asked to rank items that best described their professional identity or activities “in which they felt they made their most important contributions to the field” (p. 34). From the survey results, Milbrandt and Klein (2008) created a table of “Aspects of Art Educator Identity” (see Table 1).

Table 1. Milbrandt & Klein (2008)- Rankings of Professional Art Educator Important Aspects of Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Art Educator Identity</th>
<th>Percentage of Teachers Highest Valuing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educator, Art Educator</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor, Mentor</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher, Art Education Written Scholarship</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Service, Leadership</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Duties</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator, Artist</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activist</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis/Dissertation Chair</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Artist Researcher</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibiting Visual Artist</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this table, it is clear that art educators assume many professional roles depending on the needs of their institution. While the research states that the most important, and highest ranked identity was the role of Art Educator or Teacher (52%), the lowest ranked was Exhibiting Visual Artist (3%). This implies that teaching is a dominant identity to art educators, while being an exhibiting visual artist is a lesser part of their identity, or at least in the workplace it does not carry as much importance. One
other finding in this study notes that individuals and institutions prioritize expectations differently, and that the hiring process may emphasize one area of identity, such as artistic proficiency, but that does not necessarily correspond to what is valued in professional performance in the workplace or within one’s professional identity. Thus, there is a mismatch between what the institution values in professional identity and what the individual values in his or her professional identity.

Galbraith’s (2001) research contained similar findings about the professional identities of art educators, although her work focused on the educators of art teachers, especially their qualifications, expertise, beliefs, and practices, and how that shapes and defines art education among 600 different institutions (p. 163). Galbraith (2001) conducted her research through a questionnaire, which returned 148 usable surveys (47% male and 53% female) from 129 institutions, and followed-up by directly contacting respondents via electronic mail with more questions. Faculty largely identified themselves as “art educators” (45%) and a small group identified as “artist” (7%). However, 56% reported that they were expected to produce or exhibit art as part of their professional role (Galbraith, 2001). The rest of the respondents identified as a combination of terms such as “art educator-artist”, “artist-teacher”, “integrated arts educator”, “arts administrator”, “art therapist”, and a few other combinations. From this study, it is apparent that art educators ascribe to a multiplicity of professional identities, resulting in varied combinations and descriptions of their professional identity.

Galbraith’s (2001) work also supports that more research should occur around who art educators are, and what their classroom practices are like, acknowledging that multiple professional identities are part of what it means to be an art teacher.
The day to day professional lives of teachers is what encompasses a teacher’s perception of his or her professional identities, whether that is teaching, researching, making art, being a teacher educator, or any other category with which a teacher chooses to self-identify. In the qualitative analysis of their study, Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt (2000) found that teachers acknowledge that part of their work involves being “sensitive to problems, the atmosphere of the classroom, reactions of students, and students’ feelings of well-being” (p. 759), but where do these elements fall within scholarly categorizations of teacher’s perceptions of their professional identities?

In recent discussions, the “traditional teacher-centered concepts of teaching are increasingly being replaced by more student-centered ones with greater emphasis on learning and less on teaching” (Beijaard et al., 2000, p. 752), which bears the question, what are the boundaries between “student-teacher, individual-community, cognition-bodily experience?” (Neissen et al., 2008, p. 27). How do student and community-focused concepts of teaching affect teacher professional identity? In conclusion, teachers see their professional identities as multiple and varied combinations of roles that can be ranked in order of value, and are created from their epistemology, desires of their workplace, and from personal and social experiences. Likewise, there are additional elements that need to be accounted for when discussing teacher professional identity, such as the perspectives of the student, and teachers’ roles beyond the classroom.

**Developmental Stages of Teacher Professional Identities**

A teacher’s perception of his or her professional identity is an important part of this argument, although, perception depends on experience and human development. In order to make-meaning of what professional identity means to a teacher, in other words,
how a teacher explains or self-identifies his or her multiple professional identities, it is necessary to use an analytic tool to discern where a person is in his or her evolution of human development and socially defined tasks. An analytic tool provides a structure of interpretation of an individual’s “changing agendas and changing capacities” (Kegan, 1994, p. 6). Since identity changes over time, an individual’s perception of his or her professional identity also shifts, and these changes can be generally aligned to specified stages of development.

Kegan (1982) created a developmental stage theory, a theory of the development of consciousness (Kegan, 1994), to examine contemporary adulthood and explain the evolving self both in its transformation of consciousness and in its internal constellation. Kegan merely refers to it as the theory, and he argues that his theory is crucial because the “most important thing for us to know in understanding another is not the other’s experience but what the experience means to him or her,” (Kegan, 1982, p. 114), thus trying to grasp one’s private reality is where the understanding truly transpires.

Following in the steps of Rodgers and Scott (2008), who used Kegan’s theoretical framework for their research on personal self and professional identity of teachers, it seems appropriate to also couch this research argument within Kegan’s theory.

It is one notion to perform identity, meaning to practice one’s identity in relation to one’s context, but it is another notion to have self-awareness of one’s identity and to be able to share perspective of what one’s identity means to one’s self. Rodgers and Scott (2008) point to research that teachers need to resist the normative state of teaching, and reflect upon their own identities according to their own voice, beliefs, and professional interests. This is where the self becomes a key attribute, aside from identity, because, “If
our identities are our stories, then our selves might be the storytellers” (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 738). When teachers reach a certain developmental level, they are better able to reflect on their professional identity and what teacher professional identity means to them, and this is a critical piece to examining teacher professional identity. There comes a developmental point of consciousness (Kegan, 1982) when teachers are more able to recognize their professional identity and discuss how they perceive it.

To shed light on how teachers see themselves as professionals, Kegan’s (1982, 1994) conception of self, as it applies to teaching (Rodgers & Scott, 2008), suggests that the teacher self changes over time as the teacher makes sense of life experiences. While Kegan is a psychologist and his framework is a constructive-developmental position rooted in Piaget and Erikson (1950) among others (Kegan, 1982), his work resonates with literature on teacher identity, specifically how there are hidden developmental issues at play in the background of identity formation and assignment. Changes in teacher self are broken into developmental stages that account for differences in a teacher’s perspective of his or her experiences, pedagogy, and subject matter content as well as identity (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). For the purposes of this research, only stages two through four (see Appendix E) are examined as those stages are the most relevant and the most commonly encountered in society, according to Kegan.

What the developmental stages of self-concept mean to teacher identity is that there are different levels of understanding and acknowledgement of one’s teacher identity at different times. For instance, in stage two, a teacher is more concerned with the fulfillment of his or her projects. In stage three, the interpersonal understanding evolves and a “plurality of voices” (Kegan, 1982, p. 96) is evoked. The teacher is aware of
multiple demands from the environment. Rodgers and Scott (2008) argue that it is at this stage when teachers “are likely to enact the teacher role that is ascribed by the culture generally” (p. 741). Lastly, at stage four, teachers move from defining themselves externally to internally, with his or her own set of clear values and philosophies. Separating from the interpersonal consciousness, characterized by stage three, allows meaning to be authored by the individual, at stage four, and develop a strong sense of self. As Kegan (1982) states, at this stage it is about moving from “‘I am my relationships’ to ‘I have relationships’” (p. 100).

In Kegan’s (1994) opinion, fourth order consciousness is the representative state needed for the general population to be successful in contemporary adult life, yet, most adults are “in over their heads” (p. 197), having only attained the third stage, and this claim is not exclusive to certain socioeconomic or educational backgrounds. In studies, the most frequent consciousness position for “nurses, junior and middle managers, senior managers, and executives” (p. 197) is equivalent to being between the third and fourth orders, or 58% of those professionals do not reach the fourth order. To provide an example of what this third/fourth order divide looks like, a school principal discusses the differences between third and fourth order consciousness in his teachers:

I find that teachers who respond to visitors with friendly indifference are generally confident and competent. They have personal and professional authenticity. For these teachers the discrepancy that matters is not between ‘what am I doing’ and ‘what they want me to do,’ but rather between ‘what I am doing’ and ‘what I want to be able to do.’ Teachers who are intent on making professional behavior consistent with their beliefs about children and learning are seldom preoccupied with conformity to the expectations of others. Conversely the teacher who is unclear of important questions finds that somebody will happily impose external clarity. An instructional vacuum—an empty teacher—is quickly filled by other teachers, parents, principals, school committees, and superintendents. (Kegan, 1994, p. 170)
In the principal’s remarks, the empty teacher who is unsure of herself is at a third order consciousness, while the confident teacher full of professional authenticity is at a fourth order.

Kegan (1994) intellectualizes that in order to be successful in the workplace, society has expectations that make implicit demands on the mind, requiring more than just particular behaviors or skills, but a certain way of knowing. Individuals seek mastery in one’s work and that mastery consists not of time on the job or promotion, but of the “psychological capacity to find (or, really, to invent) one’s way of ‘doing it’” (p.182). In order to achieve competency, scholars have charted parallels between psychological and social tasks with age-defined tasks. For example, in one’s thirties, work tasks might involve: “seeking mastery, promotion, recognition, credentials, and confidence; crystallizing work identity, and readjusting career goals to realign with expectations of self” (p. 180). Hence, in most cases, a teacher in her thirties is still learning to become a teacher and figuring out her expectations of herself, whereas a teacher in her fifties is likely acting as an advisor or mentor and possibly beginning to disengage from her work role as she prepares for retirement (Keegan, 1994, p. 179). These differences in age affect one’s interpretation of and stage of professional identity.

Taken in the context of this research, Kegan’s theory supports the notion that teachers: 1) are at a certain consciousness level or stage of development that generally corresponds to one’s age, 2) move through different levels of consciousness during his or her career, 3) have to reach a “consciousness threshold in order to satisfy contemporary expectations of work” (Kegan, 1994, p. 11), and 4) the higher order of consciousness a teacher has attained, the better he or she will be able to reflect upon his or her
professional identity and roles. The implications of Kegan’s findings on how consciousness transforms through stages suggests that there are “culturewide commonalities” (Kegan, 1994, p. 11) in adults’ minds. For teachers, Kegan’s notion may be transferable to how teacher’s perceive themselves in their work, and why they perform and understand their professional identity differently at different stages of their career or lifetime.

Considerations and Challenges of Multiple Professional Identities

“Our various forms of participation delineate pieces of a puzzle we put together rather than sharp boundaries between disconnected parts of ourselves” (Wenger, 2010, p.138). A teacher is a person of many identities, and those identities are not bounded; instead they fit together to complement one another. As previously discussed, modern views on identity perceive professional identity to be malleable, multidimensional, and shaped by the context, which is the notion followed in this research. Within a community of practice (Wenger, 1998; 2010), members may be marginal, peripheral, or core depending on their participation or engagement, corresponding to the multiple types of professional identities that a teacher might inhabit. Sachs (2001) articulates this argument further by stating:

Clearly teachers inhabit multiple professional identities. For a primary school teacher for example, these might include the general category of primary teacher. However this can be broken down into further identities by year level, such as a junior, middle or upper school teacher; a subject or discipline specific teacher such as special education teacher, music teacher, physical education teacher and so on. (p. 155)

By default, a teacher possesses a combination of professional identities, which is apparent in the fact that teachers are assigned to certain subjects and grade levels. Teachers attest that teaching elementary is different than teaching secondary, yet this detail is so
enculturated into the profession that teachers hardly realize this constitutes a division within teacher professional identity. Akkerman & Meijer (2011) reference this as multiple I-positions. “The presence of multiple, possibly conflicting I-positions, can be helpful in understanding teacher identity, especially when teachers face dilemmas or tensions throughout their work” (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 311).

The existence of multiple professional identities is the fourth assumption of this research. The various categories of professional identities with which an art teacher self-identifies frame this study and propel the inquiry process. The self is composed of multiple I-positions, or multiple voices and identities, those sides of one’s personality that speak different viewpoints and stories (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). These I-positions drive the intentions of the individual, continuously constructing, reconstructing, and negotiating positions and viewpoints. As previously mentioned, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) used a dialogical approach to understand the multiplicity and unity within teacher identity. Their research looked at two different studies by Niessen (2007) and Alsup (2006), researchers who interviewed teachers about their epistemological and pedagogical beliefs. Their findings demonstrate that teachers have conflicting views about what a teacher is and should be, and what good teaching is and should be due to personal experiences, teacher education programs, and beliefs adopted while teaching. In order to discuss teacher professional identity, it is valuable to review the considerations as well as the many challenges of conducting a research study on multiple identities.

**Considerations of Multiple Professional Identities**

The first consideration is that teacher professional identity is a performance of identities. Teachers make sense of their work by moving between pedagogy, the learning
process, and the content of what is being taught, a type of performance (Sameshima, 2007). Hence, educators constantly navigate multiple professional identities in and out of the classroom, often without realizing it, as they cross between self and context attempting to make connections for student learning. In the arts in particular, there is the relationship between the artist, the art-making process, and the community/learners or viewer, who are also considered part of the artwork (Garoian, 1999).

A second consideration is that a title is not truly representative of a person’s professional identity, and, in fact, mitigates a teacher’s self-identifications. Professional titles and labels do not necessarily represent the same idea to the person with the title as they do to society. A person who teaches may not even call herself a teacher because she may professionally self-identify as something else. If identity constitutes the ways in which a person construes himself or herself through social relations, including personality, values, actions, and sense of self (Thomashow, 1996, p. 3), then the same can be said of professional identity. By constraining a professional to the title of educator or teacher, this singular term neglects the scope of an individual’s full professional social network along with his or her abilities, competencies, character, and knowledge bases (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Isaac Mizrahi, a leading icon in fashion design, best depicts this point when he declares he is not a designer, seemingly his most obvious vocation. Instead, he states:

I don’t really think of myself as a designer, and I don’t really think of myself necessarily as a fashion designer, and frankly I don’t really know what to call myself. I think of myself as um…oh, I don’t know what I think of myself as. So, that’s just that. (Mizrahi, 2008)

With this quip, the audience laughs, and Mizrahi continues:
I love to cook. And I often look at things as though they’re food. Like I say, oh, you know, would you serve a rotten chicken, then how could you serve, you know, a beat up old dress or something? I always relate things to kitchenry.” (Mizrahi, 2008)

Even though Mizrahi is undoubtedly a fashion designer by trade, he suggests that his other interests usurp his identity as a designer, the identity that society assigns to him. While kitchenry and fashion design appear to be discontiguous, for Mizrahi, the interplay of his other interests inspire his work. Likely, it is the remote connections Mizrahi makes between these areas of expertise that enable him to bring fresh perspective to his designs and contribute to his successful career as a designer. Making assumptions about a person’s professional identity is dangerous because professional identity is about fluidity, interconnectedness, and temporality that changes in the moment or over time.

A third consideration entails why teachers should reveal their professional identities to each other and to the public. In the field of education, there is concern among researchers of teacher identity that teachers compartmentalize their identities and withhold who they are, only showcasing certain aspects of themselves at certain times depending on the circumstance or audience (Bernard, 2005; Dolloff, 1999). To drive this point, Mischler (1999) used a metaphor, “we speak—or sing—ourselves as a chorus of voices, not just as the tenor or soprano soloist” (p. 8). Professional identity is a chorus that becomes stronger and more harmonious once the multitude of one’s professional abilities is embraced. By hiding professional identities due to fear, constraints, institutional restrictions, or lack of self-awareness, an individual is only a soloist perceived to perform one kind of work and is perpetually cast in the same role by society and by colleagues.
A fourth consideration is that professional identity consists of many sub-identities that potentially conflict or align with one another (Mischler, 1999). Cooper and Olson (1996) address that professional identity is a multi-faceted concept grounded in historical, sociological, psychological and cultural factors, all of which influence a teacher’s sense of self. Similarly, Milbrandt and Klein’s (2008) study, discussed earlier, of 100 art educators in higher education, asked participants to account for their time spent on various job responsibilities in order to compare how educators value and perceive their professional identities within academia. The findings revealed that educators are split in terms of which professional identities are valued most. In short, this consideration points to how a person’s professional identities may align and conflict, and sub-identities or even peripheral identities (Wenger, 2010) contribute to the constitution of one’s entire professional identity.

The last consideration is from research by Coldron and Smith (1999) who argue that teachers’ professional identities appear in their classroom practice, as seen through their choice of lesson plans, best practices and activities, and relationships with students, school, and community. Regardless of whether a teacher subjectively or objectively organizes and defines his or her self-categorizations of identity, professional identities overlap and intersect, which fundamentally influences teachers’ learning, work, and his or her role in the classroom (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Gutiérrez et al., 1999). To study the multiple professional identities of an art teacher, it seems best to examine the classroom and observe each aspect of a teacher’s practice for evidence of various identities.
Challenges of Multiple Professional Identities

There are challenges of studying multiple professional identities. Foremost, if identity is everywhere, than it is nowhere (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000), and a proliferation of multiple identities is no more helpful than proposing an individual has a singular, fixed identity. Unmooring identity from the stability of specific roles makes it useless and insignificant for analysis (Todd, 2005). The more identity categories that are created or studied, the more things may become conceptually incoherent (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Additionally, people who do not easily fit into identity categories make it difficult for empirical research, since most quantitative research on human subjects depends on categories to define certain populations (Warner, 2008). The challenge in this study is to focus on a few primary professional identities and be weary of too many categories that dilute the findings from fitting into groupings.

The second challenge of studying multiple professional identities is group identity. Today, there are ways to construct one’s identity and still belong to a collective identity (Josselson & Harway, 2012), pointing to how storied the topic of identity has become. Group identity is a term used by Phinney (2008) to describe social identity. By virtue of teaching, a person is considered a teacher and belongs to the social identity of teachers, yet this label may be unrepresentative of how the group sees themselves and what teaching means to the people who teach. Hence, group identity cannot be explored or explained through a single perspective or from a single individual (Phinney, 2008), so it is important to interview many individuals to acquire a diversity of perspectives.

Another precaution of group identity is that when people are deeply engaged in a cohesive in-group, they tend to “groupthink” (Engestrom, Engestrom, & Karkkainen,
This leads to “an overestimation of the in-group, closed-mindedness and stereotypes of out-groups” (Engestrom et al., 1995, p. 321), and limits the boundary crossing potential or intersectionality that occurs within the group. Traversing disconnected spaces is demanding; it is difficult to break individuals away from unanimity and the safety of cohesion. For these reasons, teachers choose to associate more with colleagues in their subject area, perpetuating certain mindsets and notions of identity. It is important to look at contrasts when analyzing identities, since the inside of an identity group is equally defined by those on the outside of the group, akin to the idea that participation defines non-participation (Wenger, 1998).

The third challenge of researching multiple professional identities is how to understand the extent to which self-perception affects self-identifications. When describing identity, a person’s full identity can become cumbersome, or awkwardly long. For instance, a person might be a, “transgendered, biracial, second-generation Mexican American” (Josselson & Harway, 2012, p. 4), and as of yet, psychologists have not found a good way to measure how female or how white a person is (Josselson & Harway, 2012 p. 4) let alone categorize the complex self-identification just described. Measuring how much or how little an aspect of a person’s professional identity means to the person or means to society is daunting. For this reason, qualitative research may help elucidate an individual’s personal definitions and how he or she experiences and values her professional identities.

A fourth challenge of this research is figuring out how a teacher decides, either consciously or unconsciously, to cross boundaries of professional spaces and identities. Connelly and Clandinin (1995) argue that there are two sides to a teacher’s professional
knowledge, in-classroom knowledge and out-of-classroom knowledge, and teachers experience a dilemma between these two boundaries because there are different audiences on each side of the boundary and different expectations. Parts of professional knowledge should only be shared with other professionals, and other parts will never make sense to nonexperts. How does a teacher navigate this through his or her professional identity? Teachers have to choose how to portray their teaching and what stories to share about their professional identities with whom (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995, p. 15). Researchers need to be cognizant that a teacher may be tentative in sharing events in his or her professional identity because it makes them accountable to the work they do inside or outside of the classroom.

In the fifth challenge, Wenger (1998) cautions that boundaries can act as sources of separation and fragmentation. An individual’s development of identity can be inhibited if that individual feels marginalized as a result of being on the periphery. Irwin (2004) describes this space as the borderlands, which can be a positive, socio-cultural “suturing space of multiple oppressions and the potentially liberating space through which to migrate toward a new subject position” (Irwin, 2004, p. 29). On the one hand, multiple professional identities may open awareness and be liberating, or on the other, it may cause oppression, a topic, which has largely been discussed in identity research surrounding intersectionality, race, class, and gender (Phinney, 2008). Thus, in studying multiple professional identities, one must discern whether an ascribed professional identity is aiding or abetting an individual in his or her teaching profession.

Lastly, the notion of multiple identities or multiple selves implies the psychological condition of multiple personality disorder, now termed dissociative identity
disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). This is “characterized by the presence of two or more distinct and complex identities” (“multiple personality disorder”, 2012), yet this disorder is more about the dissociation, meaning the individual’s identities impede each other, whereas this literature review focuses on how multiple identities support and create richness together (Josselson & Harway, 2012). For this reason, the challenge of multiple identities as a disorder is not considered problematic for this research.

**Intersections of Teacher Professional Identities**

Since teachers are assigned to and ascribe to professional identities, undoubtedly, there are times when these professional identities overlap and form hybrid identities. It is important to study the intersections of professional identities to understand in what ways the intersections change, alter, or impact pedagogy and classroom practices. Intersectionality has become a common tool, an important theoretical contribution, (McCall, 2005), and even a scholarly “buzzword” (Nash, 2008, p. 89) that examines the intersections and relations between identities.

In the past, feminist and anti-racist scholars used intersectionality for three reasons (Nash, 2008). These reasons included: 1) to look at the “multidimensionality of marginalized subjects lived experiences” (Nash, 2008, p. 2), 2) to provide a vocabulary to describe the variation within groups, and 3) to enable scholars to reconcile the exclusions within marginalized subjects, meaning those people who are the outliers of an identity and who provide valuable voice by bringing unique positions. Intersectionality can be used to understand how one’s professional identities overlap, combine, or conflict both within one’s self and within one’s social and personal associations. The term
intersectionality implies that there are intersections between subjects. In other words, in the interstitial space, a relationship is formed between two or more subjects, and this relationship enacts meaning-making as well as a (re)shaping of the subject/object (Irwin et al., 2008).

For this research, the theory of intersectionality recognizes that art educators can move across professional identities and situates professional identity as a set of identities that can simultaneously privilege and oppress one another. Intersectionality accounts for the fact that there is “a need for an internal arrangement and control that holds together the shifting, multiple and contradictory aspects of identity” (Rodgers & Scott, 2008 as cited in Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p. 311) because without an internal arrangement, how does the storyteller (Rodgers & Scott, 2008) make sense of his or her multiple expressions of identity? For teachers, intersections are the spaces between categories of identity, places to confront, chronicle, reflect, and understand the conflicts, tensions, alignments, and ambiguities of one’s multiple professional identities (Irwin, 2004).

This section explores the assumption that intersectionality of art teachers’ professional identity is an act of interdisciplinarity. Irwin (2004) argues that intersections are a place where hyphens, slashes, and bridges between identities create new dialogues of the meaning of teacher identity. She also believes that intersections of identity are spaces of growth, discovery, transformation, and translation manifesting in hybrid or new variations of one’s identity and classroom practices. This is similar to poststructuralists who also support the opening of spaces between self-consciousness and interrogation to explore and encounter the shifting spaces where identity is formed (Zembylas, 2003). Clandinin and Connelly (1995) claim that teachers reveal the intersections of their lived
experiences through their stories of self and through depictions of who they are in and out of the classroom. Ultimately, intersectionality is a point of convergence of professional identities, a place where deep knowing, making, and doing (Irwin, 2004) occur, especially between educational theory and practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). To begin, an overview of the background and roots of intersectionality is discussed to frame this final section of the research argument.

**Background of Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is a way to study the dynamics of differences and sameness within social contexts, expanding beyond single-axis thinking (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Kimberlé Crenshaw, a legal scholar, coined the term intersectionality in the late 1980s (Crenshaw, 1989). It refers to the idea that there are “mutually constitutive relations among social identities…couched within status and power relations” (Warner, 2008, p. 454-455). Within race, class, and gender studies, it is used to explain how “subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality…designed to combat feminist hierarchy, hegemony, and exclusivity” (Nash, 2008, p. 2). In sum, intersectionality is an exploration of the interplay of an individual’s identities, including how identities might benefit and detract from a person’s social position, power relations, and other associations.

Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) argue that intersectionality is becoming its own field of intersectional studies since it is being used in disciplines such as history, sociology, literature, and philosophy, to name a few. Many scholars already use intersections figuratively in theoretical and methodological considerations when exploring the possibilities and limitations of a subject (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013;
Dhamoon, 2011). Dhamoon (2011) purports that there are strong reasons for adopting and mainstreaming intersectionality. By adopting intersectionality into research practice, it “makes visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it” (Dhamoon, 2011, p. 230) as well as bringing fresh perspective to human rights, employment, and other areas of policy. Before intersectionality becomes mainstreamed, it should be recognized that intersectionality is still developing as a theory and a methodology, and a common definition does not yet exist. While it is growing in popularity in the literature, scholars contest how it is being used, how to study it, and how to handle its complexity (Dhamoon, 2011; McCall, 2005). In this research, intersectionality pertains to the crossover that happens between art teachers’ professional identities, which thereby creates interstitial spaces where hybrid, adapted, or revised forms of teaching manifest.

**Interdisciplinarity of Intersectionality**

How a person navigates his or her professional identities, especially being an art teacher or an artist-researcher-teacher, is a reflection of how a person perceives the intracategorical parts of himself or herself (Irwin, 2004; McCall, 2005). The self is a collection of identities living consciously and unconsciously among, amidst, between, and in the borderlands. The terms intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009), borderlands (Irwin, 1994), rhizomes (Irwin et al., 2008), hybridity (Bhabka, 1996), and third space (Gutierrez et al., 1999) represent a collection of metaphors and theories that attempt to articulate what happens on the periphery of or within the overlap of identities. Each explains a
variation of how identity is a boundless network of advantages, limitations, positionings, and (re)considerations of a person depending on the time, place, or space.

Although a/r/tography is a recent development in arts-based research, it embraces a multilectical, instead of a dialectical, stance of understanding in an attempt move toward “more complex intertextuality and intratextuality of categories” (Irwin, 2004, p. 28). In this way, a/r/tography, “encourages thirdness, an in-between space that exists between and among categories” (Irwin, 2004, p. 28). Since intersectionality discusses the intersecting spaces of identities, and a/r/tography specifically addresses the spaces between artist-researcher-teacher identities, intersectionality supports the notion of interdisciplinariness within professional identities.

Engestrom, Engestrom and Karkkainen (1995) note that the greatest potential is seen when “ideas, concepts, and instruments” (p. 321) are transported across unrelated domains because it causes unexpected connections and new forms of subject/object relationships. The problem with conforming to a group identity or remaining within one type of professional circle is that there is limited dispersion of social identities to tilt and fragment the common beliefs and opinions, which causes one’s professional identity to remain fixed and prefigured instead of blurry and ambiguous. Cross-pollination between professional groups and between professional identities provides fuel to re-think and re-make the terms of one’s identity, one’s professional practice, and one’s context (Irwin, 2004). When an art teacher considers himself or herself as an artist, a teacher, and perhaps a third, fourth, or even fifth professional identity, oftentimes these professional identities represent a range of disparate disciplines, suggesting that intersections are interdisciplinary spaces as well as hybrid spaces.
Intersections as Convergent, Transformational, and Translational Points

Intersections are powerful places of identity. The theory of intersectionality is created to disclose how those who live in the borders of an identity re-think, re-live, and re-make the terms of their identities as they confront contradictory worlds (Rogoff, 2000 cited in Irwin, 2004, p. 29). In a sense, the space in between identities is where things are undone (Springgay, 2008), where identity is frayed and unbound. Being in the intersection of two or more identities requires openness to the complexity of a person’s edges and discontinuities, making it a place of vulnerability as well as a place of surreality because it contains known and unknown aspects of identity.

A common dilemma for art teachers is that they find themselves stuck between the professional roles of artist and teacher, questioning when and how to be an artist or a teacher, as well as whom they are when they are in the intersections and edges of those professional spaces. Irwin (2004) believes that the intersections are places of ambiguity, similarity and difference, darkness and lightness, resolution and growth, and nurturing and withholding; they are the places where one wrestles with the borders and boundaries of who they truly are. One must recognize that the overlap of two or more identities can be both enlightening and confusing; it is an uncomfortable place of conflict and an empowering place of connection amongst identities.

Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López and Tejada (1999) acknowledge that learning spaces are hybrid spaces, meaning classrooms are inherently multi-voiced, multi-dimensional and intersectional both due to what the students bring and due to the experience, knowledge, and identities that a teacher brings. When professional identities converge, it creates a thirdness, a combination of the first and second identity, into a new, hybridized,
third kind of professional identity. Since an art teacher can be both an artist and a teacher in the classroom, what happens in the space between those two identities? Some part of the teacher must transform, as well as some part of the artist, and together this translates into a new form of artist/teacher. Ostensibly, as identities weave together, they converge into “a new third world in which tradition no longer constitutes true identity; instead, there are multiple identities” (Irwin, 2004, p. 29). This thirdness holds promise for a true integration of feeling, thoughts, and practice, and research helps to describe what occurs at the interstices of constantly shifting identity relationships.

The convergence of identities and the intersections of identities leads to the deepening of identities. In Irwin’s (2004) words, “living a life of deep meaning enhanced through perceptual practices that reveal what was once hidden, create what has never been known, and imagine what we hope to achieve” (p. 36). In the spaces between, similarities and differences of professional identities are often blurred, opening up new meanings and revealing continual diffusion of multiple borders. This causes the individual to move from ignorance and into knowing (Irwin, 2004, p. 33), thus deepening one’s personal and professional reflection and understanding of identity.

To further illustrate how intersections are convergent, translational and transformational points, I draw upon the artistic movement known as surrealism. In art history, surrealists purposely transformed the ordinary into altered ideologies, and they enjoyed playing with words, visual art, and objects to derive new interpretations of reality (Umland, 2013). The surrealists challenged the real world by subsuming reality and manifesting perceptions of the material world as disillusions of the recognizable. In fact, surrealists use juxtaposition, paradoxical relationships, metamorphosis, and other
techniques to purposely render ideas in unusual ways and exploit new meanings and references (Ollinger-Zinque & Leen, 1998).

In the surrealist artwork *Le Blanc-Seing* (see figure 1) by René Magritte, not only does the impossible appear possible, but the eye is tricked into making sense of the space between the trees, rider, and horse. Magritte utilizes inconsistency, requiring the viewer to turn the fragmented parts into a coherent whole and constantly adjust one’s gaze to notice the illusions. At first, the painting does not seem too peculiar, but upon further study, there are noticeable irregularities. Why is the rider’s left hand missing behind the negative space? Why is the horse’s hind leg both in front of and behind a tree? How is this possible? How can a thing be in multiple planes of space at one? It seems absurd even though all of the images are familiar. The contortions of space/object are what transform the subject matter. The viewer thinks he or she sees one thing, but then sees something else. The title *Le Blanc-Seing* adds another layer as it roughly translates to *Free Hand* or *Free Rein* implying that the rider is riding freely through the forest, indifferent to the trees or to navigation. The painting purposefully violates assumptions of position, reality, and relationships, blurring what belongs where and how to define each object. The work of surrealists is an historical and artistic example of how intentional juxtaposition or metamorphosis can cause uncanny, irrational, and uncharted ideas to be translated and take on other meanings. By weaving ideas together, hybrid concepts form, and therefore interstitial space becomes transformational space.
The transformation of one’s professional identities is significant to one’s practice. By delving into the interstices of professional identities, there is potential to expand, shift, and promote new kinds of connection within teaching practices (Gutiérrez et al., 1999). Intersections become the spaces of convergence, translation, transformation, and also the hybrid spaces of a teacher’s professional practices.

**Stories of Self Reveal Intersections**

Rodgers and Scott (2008) use the metaphor of a deck of cards spread across a tabletop to explain teacher identity; at any moment certain cards may be turned face up or grouped together depending on the circumstance. How then, does one make sense of the cards and how the cards intersect or complement one another, otherwise termed one’s identities? Connelly and Clandinin (1995) argue that narrative is one of the best and most widely used ways to gain an understanding of a teacher’s view of their knowledge,
their lives, their classrooms, and their identities. Likewise, Ropers-Huilman (1999) notes that poststructuralists, such as Foucault, believe that “Discourses, rather than truths, shape and allow for certain meanings and subsequent experiences” (p. 23).

Narrative is an important tool because it is the embodiment of the stories of self that shape one’s life and work (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995). Teachers need time and opportunities to reflect on and tell their stories of self because it brings “possibility for awakenings and transformations” (p. 13), or as some scholars say, reflection-in-action or knowing-in-action (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995). It is through the telling of stories that people live stories and retell their experiences, hence, revealing the intersections of their professional identities, and where, how, and when those identities meet, conflict, shift, and (re)construct.

The classroom is one of the core intersections of a teacher’s multiple identities; in the classroom, a teacher’s professional identities come together during the teaching, sharing, and construction of knowledge. Needless to say, the “way of being in the classroom is storied” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995, p. 12), which means the classroom is one of the “spaces which allow for all of our stories, even the hard-to-tell conflicting stories” (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009, p. 152). Classrooms are where boundaries are crossed in a teacher’s professional identity.

Referencing the previous section on the challenges of studying multiple professional identities, a teacher’s primary identity struggle is whom they are inside versus outside of the classroom (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995). Although a teacher may ascribe to whichever professional identities she chooses, it is through a teacher’s narrative that reveals who she thinks she is as a professional in that moment, be it inside
or outside of the classroom. For this reason, stories are critical for portraying the intersecting lived experiences of teachers’ work, and how teachers experience shifts, conflicts, and ambiguities in their work no matter the context.

Conclusion

Multiple professional identities within art teacher identity is a complex topic, and as such requires appropriate theoretical and methodological structures to aid in analyzing and interpreting how teachers perceive and perform their professional identities. As stated in the literature, it is clear that art educators have multiple professional identities, and art educators themselves need to be aware of their own professional identities. The purpose of this research is to explore art teachers’ self-perceptions and self-categorizations of their professional identities and to determine the kinds of novel or hybrid teaching practices that occur within the intersections of their professional identities. At this time, the literature largely does not acknowledge interstitial spaces of identity, nor does it distinguish or describe how interstitial space may be important to teacher professional identity.

Intersectionality is a tool that highlights the intersections of professional identity and mines them for their powerful properties and innovative qualities. To understand and (re)consider the multiple professional identities of art educators, is to realize the vitality of what happens in the spaces in between professional identity. One does not just practice being an artist, a researcher, or a teacher, instead, one must live and experience the cohesion, contiguity, and discontiguity that comes from the performance of these identities and from other professional identities. The deep meaning of one’s professional identities lies at the intersections between them.
This literature review attests that there is strong interest in studying and defining teacher identity and the professional identity of teachers. In order to analyze teacher professional identity, it is paramount to discuss unity and multiplicity within teacher identities, and use evidence of developmental stages of consciousness to account for teachers’ own perceptions of their identities at any given point in their career. When studying the multiple professional identities of art teachers, it is pragmatic to constrain the breadth of identities being studied to core and supporting professional identities, so as not to create limitless possibilities of categorizations, and also to be weary of teacher group identity, which may limit outlying perspectives of professional identity. Likewise, the relationships between teachers and other work colleagues are influential to the development and self-assignment of professional identity.

Most art teachers perform more than one professional identity in their classrooms, and that is why it is important to study and inquire about these spaces of deep knowing, making, and doing in order to find what kinds of practices result at the intersections. The intersectionality of teachers’ professional identities is motivated by the counterbalances between in and out of classroom experiences, paired with institutional values and personal epistemology. As teachers’ professional identities overlap and converge, they become reconfigured, even hybridized, into other forms of teacher identity. For this research, stories from individual teachers are critical because that is how teachers reveal their self-perceptions of their professional identities, and individual narratives can be compiled into larger themes in order to evaluate what teacher professional identity means to the profession along with what intersections of professional identity look like.
Once again, the research questions that frame this study are:

1. How do art teachers define the term *professional identity*?

2. To what professional identities do art teachers ascribe to or self-assign, aside from being a teacher?

3. What novel traits or practices occur in or as a result of the interstitial spaces of art teachers’ professional identities?

To investigate these research questions and to understand how multiple professional identities are experienced by art teachers, a/r/tography is used as the primary research methodology. A/r/tography is a research practice that elicits inquiry around the doubling and shifting between artist-researcher-teacher identities, or any other professional identities to which an art teacher self-ascribes. Chapter three will outline the entire research design, provide more details about a/r/tography, and discuss how the data will be collected and analyzed.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Uncovering the Intersections and Revealing Identity through Art and Writing

To depict and evaluate the intersections of teacher professional identity, specifically art teachers, a unique methodology and research design was established. Approaching this research, it was apparent that linguistic measures alone would not sufficiently represent the breadth and depth of the professional identities of art teachers since their identities consist of being artists and creating meaning through art making. Arts-based research aims to “address complex and often subtle interactions” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 3) that breaks into new methodological grounds. Consequently, an arts-based methodology, known as a/r/tography, is the primary methodology of this research study because it literally converges art and writing while also intentionally exploring the spaces between artist, researcher, and teacher identities. Furthermore, a/r/tography is not prescriptive in its use as a methodology, therefore to aid the data analysis and interpretation, additional tools were used which include devices from surrealism, Kegan’s (1982) developmental stage theory, metaphorical representations (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011), and portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Together these tools enabled me to distill the data and provide greater understanding of art teacher professional identity and the interstitial spaces that form as a result of the day-to-day work of art teachers. In the following section, I will further explain the methodology, supporting frameworks, research design, and data collection process.
A/r/tography

A/r/tography is an arts-based approach largely pioneered by Stephanie Springgay and Rita Irwin (Springgay et al., 2008), and it is practiced by other a/r/tographers who are interested in self-study and relational inquiry. While a/r/t is an acronym for artist-researcher-teacher, it also recognizes art as a dialogical pair. A/r/tography is the unification of the visual and textual that complement one another to allow further understanding and investigation as well as to “teach something different yet similar, allowing us to inquire more deeply into our practices” (Irwin, 2004, p. 31). To understand a/r/tography, Irwin (2004) offers this idea:

Art is the visual reorganization of experience that renders complex the apparently simple or simplifies the apparently complex. Research is the enhancement of meaning revealed through ongoing interpretations of complex relationships that are continually created, recreated, and transformed. Teaching is performative knowledge in meaningful relationships with learners…A/r/tography becomes that third space between theory and méstissage while opening up the spaces between artist-researcher-teacher. There are spaces between and spaces between the in-between. There are multiple borders diffused again and again. (p. 31)

A/r/tography is a theoretical and methodological expression of intersectionality that accounts for three dueling aspects of professional identity. A/r/t is an acronym depicting three separate identities, and a/r/tography is an act of inquiry into the spaces between (Springgay et al., 2008).

Inquiry is essential to a/r/tography; some scholars perceive it to be a type of action research or autoethnography because both seek to understand the borderlands and untangle the complexity contained in lived experiences (Irwin, 2004). Additionally, a/r/tographic inquiry helps researchers explore the conscious and unconscious actions and perceptions of an individual, uncovering transformative practices along the way (Irwin, 2004). As a form of research, a/r/tographic inquiry portrays visual and textual
understandings as opposed to visual and textual representations (Springgay et al., 2008). The mode of searching, question ing, and probing the process is more important than culminating in an artistic form. A/r/tography engages art with “graphy”, which is writing, creating a dialogue between knowing, doing, and making as an artist-researcher-teacher. *Art* and *graphy* expose meaning in the other and point to possibilities as opposed to descriptions (Springgay et al., 2008).

It is not assumed that all art teachers are a/r/tographers or that all art teachers perceive themselves to be a/r/tographers. Rather, a/r/tography merely suggests that when artists, researchers, or teachers begin to question conventions of their practice, wonder about alternate methods of doing, and search for greater meaning in their work, then the practice of a/r/tography enables a pathway to explore relationships and open new meanings in the spaces in between, a way to interweave and intraweave the fabrics of the world (Springgay et al., 2008). In this respect, a/r/tography is a true form of interdisciplinary research and reflects the nature of intersectionality.

I approach this work as an a/r/tographer, someone who is aware of and purposely capitalizes on the in-between spaces of identity. A/r/tographers are artist-researchers-teachers who share their experiences and practices in order to explore their “questions, practices, emergent understandings, and creative analytic texts” (Irwin, 2004, p. 34), and live their practices by integrating understandings through aesthetic experiences of meaning, not facts. Because I consider myself an artist-researcher-teacher, among other professional identities, during my research process and in the findings, I use textual and visual processes to inquire, understand, share, and integrate the lived experiences of other art teachers (Irwin, 2004).
Ultimately, a/r/tography enables me to explore and uncover the spaces in-between art teacher professional identity by acting as a dialectic of knowing, doing, and making (Pinar, 2004), and as an inquiry into the third spaces of learning and teaching (Irwin, 2004). Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, and Gouzouasis (2008) believe that in its simplest form, “a/r/tographical work entails living and inquiring in the in-between, of constantly questing, and complicating that which has yet to be named” (p. xxxi). A/r/tography is about “deep meaning”, a term borrowed from phenomenology, and ultimately is a “form of representation that privileges both text and image” (Irwin as stated in Pinar, 2004, p. 10).

Although my participants do not purport to be a/r/tographers, nor did they need to be in order to participate in this study, I assign that title to myself, as I believe it encompasses the lenses and values I bring to this work, both as a professional and as the researcher. As a methodology, a/r/tography allows me to connect, combine, and explore all forms of data from interviews and written reflections to art making and teaching artifacts. This way, I am able to analyze findings as a unified body of data, making a/r/tography the proper methodology for the purpose of this research.

Furthermore, what I find both fascinating and troublesome about a/r/tography is that it does not limit inquiry solely to those with artist/researcher/teacher identities, but it can be widened to include any variation of identities such as artist/teacher/curator or artist/professor/student (R. Irwin personal communication November 26, 2013), truly anyone who seeks to balance and blend practice with knowing, doing, and making. Due to this flexibility, a/r/tography affords endless suppleness around identity research and intersectionalities that lay therein. Although, a/r/tography opens up spaces of inquiry,
renderings make sense of “the relationship between processes of the arts and the processes of research” (Sameshima & Irwin, 2008, p.1). Renderings are the thematics from the data.

**Portraiture**

Whereas a/r/tography seeks to open and examine complexities of interconnectedness, portraiture portrays the richness of the subject being studied in order to capture the textures and subtleties of the participants’ lived experience and to “reveal their essence” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 4). In addition to a/r/tography, portraiture is employed as a form of inquiry that makes the subjects feel seen, attended to, appreciated, and scrutinized (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 5). Portraiture, for this research, is a textual methodology, however, in other circumstances, it is an artful and intentional method of composing visual representations. Because of these qualities, portraiture complements a/r/tography well and bolsters the premise of merging art and writing.

Portraiture also attends to the crossing of boundaries since a portrait can be made in art as well as through writing (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Not only did I take actual photographic portraits of each participant to visually document them for my research, but in chapter four, I began each section of the individual participants with a linguistic portrait to fashion a likeness of their work setting, style, and environment. Using portraiture enables me to articulate aspects of the participants that are beyond their stories and provides additional context. Through portraiture, I am able to make each participant more visible and document the unique details that surround their professional
identities, which assists with reflecting the nuances of intersectionality found in the work place.

**Surrealist Devices**

Importantly, in a/r/tography, there is no set structure to the methodology or a fixed set of renderings to distill insights (R. Irwin personal communication November 26, 2013). In which case, it is up to the researcher to determine these. The renderings for this research were derived from the participant data along with devices used in surrealism since surrealism combines artistic, intellectual, and literary expressions to analyze reality and the subconscious (MoMA Learning, 2014).

Surrealism, which grew from the Dada movement and was inspired by Baudelaire (Michel, 2000), believed in an unspeakable reality concealed behind symbols (in the minds of surrealist, words were only symbols) and attempted to reveal the inner-richness that was concealed beneath surreality, or human consciousness. Surrealists enjoyed exploring the relationships between words and things along with merging objects together. In fact, René Magritte, probably the most prolific surrealist artist (Ollinger-Zinque & Leen, 1998), refused to be called an artist and preferred to be “considered a thinker who communicated by means of paint” (Foucault, 1983 p. 2), demonstrating how even he questioned his own professional identity.

Scholars (Elder, 2013; Ollinger-Zinque & Leen, 1998; Orban, 1997; Umland, 2013) list assortments of devices that surrealist artists use to defamiliarize the familiar through visual and literary artworks and reconcile dreams with reality. Some of the Surrealist devices they used were: displacement, condensation, juxtaposition, doubling, isolation, metamorphosis, misnaming, substitution, and alteration. The definitions of
each are outlined in Appendix D. These devices reflect the strategies that Surrealist artists employed to banish resemblance, amplify similitude, and make language an arbitrary signifier of reality. Thus, for the content analysis of each participant and for the overall thematics, these devices inform the a/r/tographic renderings.

**Kegan’s Developmental Evolution of Self**

To further uncover and analyze professional identity, not only is it important to recognize the intersections and blurriness between identities, but to also realize that identity is fluid and develops over time, hence, Kegan’s developmental theory of self was applied to the data to sort the evolution of one’s professional identity associations. Kegan outlines five developmental stages, yet for the purposes of this research, only stages two through four are addressed because those stages are the most relevant. Importantly, the stages increase with complexity, thus the higher the stage, the higher the sense of one’s self and consciousness, and once an individual moves up, they do not slide backward to a prior stage.

In stage two, *Imperial*, is the construction of role differentiation and an ability to take command of one’s impulses and know “who I am” not just “that I am” (Kegan, 1982, p. 89). Stage three, *Interpersonal*, is embedded in “mutually reciprocal relationships,” (Kegan, 1982, p. 119) acknowledging collaboration. Stage four, *Institutional*, consists of personal autonomy, self-authorship, and group involvement.

For this research, Kegan’s stages of development were applied to the interview scripts, adding questions that pertain to teacher professional identity development, and also to the data interpretation. Using Kegan’s orders of consciousness as guidelines for analyzing why teachers perceive or construct their identities in certain ways, allowed me
to reflect upon and determine themes and findings that were both a result of intersectionality and the teacher’s own professional evolution. Rodgers and Scott (2008) created three research questions and configured a matrix that aligned each question with a revised version of Kegan’s stages of development (see Appendix E). For example, one question is, “How does the teacher make sense of her relationship with others?” (p. 740), and alongside the stage, Rodgers and Scott made notations on the teacher’s response. This method appears to be an effective way of integrating Kegan’s framework into my research and eliciting a spectrum of how art teachers perceive their professional identities.

**Metaphorical Representations**

Defining and describing one’s professional identity is a challenging pursuit, and language only goes so far to depict one’s experience of his or her professional identity. Consequently, participants were asked to create metaphorical representations of how they perceived their professional identity in order to elicit understandings beyond a linguistic level. Not only does this concept correspond to a/r/tographic research, but also mimics techniques used by surrealists that bring feelings and the subconscious into the process in addition to language.
Sameshima and Irwin (2008) state, “In using metaphors to articulate our notions of working in liminal spaces, we describe relational inquiries between artful research processes and artful scholarly research representations” (p. 13). Ostensibly, metaphors convey conceptualizations of phenomenon that go beyond the thing itself and mediate multiple dimensions of thinking, so called “layered planes” of relationality (Sameshima & Irwin, 2008). Inherently, metaphors open new spaces and transform what is known to something that is not known.

Metaphorical representations are an established type of qualitative research and have been used extensively as a research tool to engage teachers in expressing their beliefs and experiences in teaching (De Leon-Carill, 2007; Goldstein, 2005; Mahllos, Massengill-Shaw, & Barry, 2010). In fact, Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) conducted a study of 45 participants over three years that used metaphors as a way to explore the identity development process that new teachers undergo. In this study, metaphors allowed the researchers to focus on the who rather than the role of being a teacher. They found that pre-service teachers need a variety of opportunities to engage in dialogues of professional identity.

The fascinating idea behind this study is that Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) witnessed a kind of sensing emerge from metaphorical reflection that did not appear in verbal discourse, and which further evoked the actual work of teaching. They found that teachers expressed other forms of knowledge that cannot be imparted through observations or discussions alone. Consequently, participants in this study made metaphorical representations, mostly 2D collages, of their professional identities as a way to obtain additional insights into their professional identities.
Renderings of Relational Inquiry

The final element of the data analysis is the renderings. Renderings are the concepts that emerge from the a/r/tographic inquiry process. In many ways, renderings are akin to themes that bring meaning and articulate the in-between spaces of identities. They develop out of the relational content of interdisciplinarity, not in isolation, and provide points of “embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text and between and among the roles of artist/researcher/teacher and viewer/reader” (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 900). This means that renderings support the artful inquiry and writing by focusing on the interconnected processes instead of the separate methods between disciplines (Springgay et al, 2008). A way to think about renderings is that they “move into the boundaries between theory, practice and creative activity and allow each to impact one another. A rigorous attending to the renderings will result in deep interactions within the relational conditions of relational inquiry,” (Springgay et al., 2008, p. xxxi). Effectively, renderings are the frames from which to cultivate new insights about a particular phenomenon and to evaluate the findings of a/r/tographic research.

Research Questions and Study Design

As an a/r/tographer conducting this study, I observed, interviewed, and engaged art teachers in order to gain insights into how they perceived their professional identities and performed their work. I divided the research design into two parts: one that consisted of group participants and another that consisted of five individual participants. The intention was to collect a range of ideas, almost a snapshot of the landscape of professional identity, from the group participants, and then to go deeper with the individual participants to gather interpretations and thick descriptions (Creswell, 2013).
Because of the a/r/tographic nature of this design, I used a variety of qualitative data collection techniques including interviews, metaphorical representations, and written reflections in order to reveal professional identities and uncover intersections between those identities.

As I am interested in how art teachers consider their professional identity, what identities they ascribe to, and what, if any, heretofore unknown combinations of professional identities they might possess, I used the following research questions to guide my study with my participants:

1. How do art teachers define the term *professional identity*?
2. To what professional identities do art teachers ascribe or self-assign, aside from being a teacher?
3. What novel traits or practices occur in or as a result of the interstitial spaces of art teachers’ professional identities?

**Group Participants**

There were two types of participants in this research study. The first type was group participants, fourteen art teachers who came together to participate collectively, and the second type was individual participants, five art teachers who participated in more in-depth, individual research. The group participants were members of an art teacher group called Meaning Makers\(^1\) (more information about the group is described in the following section) that hosted monthly meetings during the school year for art teachers to convene and discuss theory and practice. The group consists of

\(^1\) Name has been changed to a pseudonym
approximately 20 members (membership is free) with 12 to 14 art teachers participating on a regular basis. Fourteen of the members consented to participating in this research.

Participants range in age from mid-twenties to fifties, all but one or two are Caucasian, and there are two males in the group. Everyone has an active teaching practice, mostly in primary and secondary public schools, but a couple work in higher education. Collectively, the group represents at least three different school districts within an urban and suburban region in the western United States, and those who teach in K-12 all teach at different schools. The monthly meetings are held in the educational classroom of an art gallery. The art gallery is part of the art education department of a university, who is also the host of this group. The gallery is located in the heart of the creative district in a metropolitan area.

**Individual Participants**

To recruit the individual participants, I asked if anyone from the group participants was interested in being interviewed and observed for the second part of my research. Prior to selecting individual participants, I created a list of criteria I sought to obtain in order to have a cross-section of experiences, ages, school settings, gender, and racial identities. From the group participants who volunteered to be in the additional study, four met the criteria I had established. Then, I used recommendations from the group participants to seek and contact the fifth participant who agreed to be an individual participant, and it turned out that this person had also been a member of the Meaning Makers. Information on the individual participants is described in Table 2, and all names are pseudonyms.
In the individual participants, the youngest art teacher was Ingrid Kent. She is 33 and has been teaching for 8 years, but only 6 of those as an art teacher. The other two years was as a paraprofessional in special education. Ingrid attended art school and received her BFA in Art History and her MA in Art Education, and as of this school year, just started teaching grades 6th-8th at Smiley, a suburban k-12 school focused on creative arts. Tom was one of the newest art teachers, only in his second year of teaching. Tom is 35 and teaches grades 7th and 8th at Benton, an International Bachelaureatte school in a large suburban school district with a high needs population. He received his BFA in photography and worked in a photo store for 10 years prior to teaching. Allison is also a recently certified art teacher who is in her third year of teaching art but her first year at Putnam Elementary. She was an artist and teaching artist for many years before becoming certified, and has her BFA in photography. Nicole is 41 years old and has been teaching for 14 years, although she just switched to high school after being an elementary art teacher. She is in her first year as the ceramics, jewelry, and sculpture teacher at a Pence High School, a large urban, public high school called undergoing many transitions and reforms. Nicole has her BA in art education. Finally, Nancy is 53 years old and has been teaching for 20 years. Previously, she was the elementary art teacher at a charter school, completed her BA in art, MFA in painting, and received her national board certification. Currently, she is a professor at Lowell University teaching art education and a painting and drawing course.
Table 2: Individual Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art Teacher Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>School</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>College</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group Participants Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection took place over four months and involved interviews, transcriptions, observations, written reflections, group discussions, and metaphorical representations. There were two parts to the data collection, the group participants and the individual participants.

To begin the research, I spoke with a local art teachers who are part of a group called Meaning Makers, of which I a member, that hosts monthly meetings during the school year. This group has been in existence as a research group, a term designated by them, since 2012 and is associated with a nearby university. I joined the group in the fall of 2012 as a way to meet art teachers across the city and engage in thoughtful dialogue around our common interests and identities of being classroom practitioners and artists. Even though I am a member of the group, I only know a few of the participants closely.

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2 All names used in this study to refer to teachers and schools are pseudonyms.
The rest I know by name or do not know at all because attendance fluctuates and I did not regularly participate last year.

I approached the leaders of the group in July with my research topic, before the beginning of the school year, and they agreed to let me lead the monthly meetings for the first three months so that I could collect data and engage the members in activities and discussions around their professional identities. When I began this research at the start of the school year, some of the art teachers were brand new to the group while others had been attending since the start. Initially, I emailed the entire group before the first meeting to introduce myself and provide an overview of the research project and purpose, and this allowed them time to process my invitation to participate in the study.

Upon the first meeting in September, I reiterated my research topic in person and answered questions. At that point, I described the sequence of the research and what would take place in the following two meetings in October and November. Each face-to-face meeting lasted one hour and fifteen minutes and occurred on a weeknight after school. The first fifteen minutes is when participants arrive, mingle, and share snacks of crackers, cheese, cookies, and wine. Then, the hour consists of focused time around a topic or activity.

During our first meeting, I began with a community-building exercise and introductions, since this was the first meeting of the year. Afterwards, I provided an overview of my research study and a/r/tography, as the group is premised around art theory and practice. Finally, I explained why I am curious about investigating multiple professional identities of art teachers and some of my personal rationale for this work. At
that point, I gained consent from the members who agreed to participate in the group portion of this study.

The second meeting was an hour of art making where participants created a metaphorical representation of how they perceive their multiple professional identities. Most participants used collage but a few took the idea in other directions and used materials they brought from home. Since it was an art education room, there were a number of supplies available such as paper, magazines, scissors, glue, drawing utensils, and other small objects. Most participants did not finish their representation during the hour and chose to take it home to continue working on it before the next meeting.

In November, the third meeting was when we discussed and reflected upon the metaphorical representations that the participants had made during the second meeting. I divided the evening into two small group activities, about 7 people in each group. First, individuals spread their metaphorical representations on the table and looked at the entire collection made by all of the people in their group. As a group, they spoke out loud, describing commonalities they noticed between the artworks, and one person was the scribe taking notes from the discussion.

Following this, the participants took turns in an interpretation activity. The instructions were for the artist to listen while the other participants analyzed his or her artwork. After a few minutes, the artist was allowed to respond and explain his or her rationale. This enabled the group to generate their own meanings and build understanding without being influenced by the artist. Finally, for the last ten minutes, we came together as a full group and continued discussing thoughts, insights, and feelings around what participants heard and saw. A total of 3.75 hours was spent in person with
the group participants along with three hours of outside planning time with the group leaders.

Data from the group participants was collected and analyzed with various measures. The metaphorical representations made by the participants were photographed and analyzed for actual meaning and interpreted meaning (Kvale, 2007) of content and composition. Video recordings were made of the second and third meetings, and I watched the footage twice and transcribed parts of it for meaning condensation (Kvale, 2007). Audio recorders were used during the third meeting, one with each small group discussion, and I transcribed significant parts for syntax and conversation analysis. At the onset of the small group discussions, participants used post-it notes to record their observations and visual analysis of the metaphorical representations using the four areas of art criticism: description, interpretation, evaluation, and judgment, thus their thoughts became written data, and there was an assigned note taker at each small group to record general notes from the conversations. I used this data to triangulate the meanings and interpretations between the audio and the visual artwork. Lastly, participants were asked to answer five questions about their metaphorical representations so as to record and articulate their personal thoughts on their representations and what it meant to them. These written reflections were analyzed using open coding, which helped establish meanings and identify relationships across the metaphorical representations.

In sum, the audio recordings, video recordings, visual artworks, written reflections, and notes formed a solid base of data from which to categorize and classify themes regarding professional identity that pertained to the group of 14 participants (Creswell, 2013). I felt it was important to ask these art educators to explore and define
their identity through multiple forms of expression in order to discover and uncover the unique spaces that occur among and amidst their professional identities. Again, it is important to note that four of the five individual participants also participated in the individual study.

**Individual Participants- Data Collection and Analysis**

I began studying the individual participants mid-way through the group participant work in mid-October. Over a period of one month, I visited the classrooms of the five individual participants and observed them teaching for 1 to 1.5 hours. Having met four of the five individuals through the group work, I already had a rapport and some level of familiarity with each of them, but with the fifth person, I took extra time at the first meeting to establish a connection. Also, having been an art teacher and completed a degree in art education, I was able to empathize with the participants because I had strong subject matter knowledge and background in the content we were discussing. I was not an outsider to the group I was studying since I was a member of Meaning Makers and a professional colleague. I believe this also made me attuned to certain structures, cultures, and situations they described in their professional work and made me better able to guide questions and listen for or push deeper into certain responses or reactions (Kvale, 2007).

I conducted two 1-hour semi-structured interviews using a loose interview script³ (Kvale, 2007) with each art teacher, typically beginning with their classroom observation, and then meeting directly afterwards to conduct the first interview. The second interview occurred one to two weeks after the first interview. For three of the participants, I only

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³ See Appendix A
met them in their classroom, for the other two participants, I met them once in their classroom and another time at their home or in their studio.

The majority of chapter four is focused on the individual participants, and this is because I spent more time with these participants, and their stories reveal their social patterning and self-categorizations, and the social structures and self-definitions they have internalized (Todd, 2005). When teachers and researchers share stories, it encourages them to engage in reflexive inquiries of self-consciousness, and allows them to delve into the paradigms of the “normative”, leading to the development of pedagogy that is at the same time liberating and accepting of diversity (Sameshima, 2007, p. xi). Through the interviews, classroom observations, and review of each teacher’s teaching artifacts, the intersections of their professional identities slowly appeared.

During the observations, I took field notes on my laptop, paying close attention to the setting, participants, activities, interactions, and conversations through my senses (Creswell, 2013). I was a nonparticipant observer in each classroom, hardly interacting with students unless they spoke with me, and that only occurred in one classroom. Before and after the observations, I walked around the school grounds and hallways, but spent most of my attention on the teacher’s classroom in order to study objects, student projects, and other details existing in the learning environment. After observations, I asked the teacher for any handouts, lesson plans or other teaching artifacts she or he was willing to share as a way to study how the teacher plans, thinks and approaches his or her work.

For the interviews, I used an audio recorder, an interview script, and took some notes during the interview. The initial interview focused on the teacher’s past
professional history, reasons for entering teaching, and her definition of professional identity as well as explicitly identifying any of her perceived professional identities. After listening to the audio recording of the first interview at least once all the way through, I prepared a list of secondary questions and topics which guided my questioning during the second interview. Once the interviews were complete, I listened to both the first and second interviews at least twice more, transcribing large portions and significant segments, and employed open coding to create categories of major information to aid in contextual analysis.

Additionally, I collected handouts, lesson plans, rubrics, and other artifacts created by the art teacher, photographs of student artwork or their works in progress, and photographs of the classroom setting. These documents allowed me to study elements and aspects that were not immediately apparent during my first visit, and allowed me to inquire about them in more detail during the second interview. In sum, data from the individual participants consisted of observations, interviews, photographs of classroom settings, artifacts of teacher and student work, and my field notes.

**Limitations of this Study**

I have decided to study this group of individuals because of my familiarity and intimate knowledge of Meaning Makers as well as being an art teacher by training. Not only does this group align with the premise of a/r/tography, but also Meaning Makers embodies and supports the notion of intersecting identities, using art as the catalyst to examine theory and practice. The benefits of asking members of Meaning Makers to be participants in my study are that there is an established rapport and trust, I already have
access to and inclusion in this group, and I believe these members will be eager to think and reflect upon their professional identities.

However, there are a few drawbacks to working with this group as my research participants. First, because I am already in this group, I may bring more subjectivity and bias as a researcher, of which I may or may not be aware. To overcome this, I kept a journal of my thoughts, feelings, and perceptions during the research, and try to clearly identify to my audience any areas where I perceive subjectivity and bias being present. Second, this set of participants lacks gender and racial diversity, a consideration for future research to address. There is only one male represented and one racial identity aside from Caucasian. Finally, third, a/r/tography is still an emerging practice and rather open-ended. Some scholars wonder how it is being assessed and what impact it has in the field. Leading scholars of a/r/tography would argue that the measurement of impact is based on how the work heightens discourse and work should not be compared to other work, but measured against existing structures within itself (Springgay et al., 2008).

Overall, I believe the benefits of working with Meaning Makers in this research outweigh the drawbacks. I felt this was a meaningful partnership where my activities brought insights and value to Meaning Makers as a result of their participation in the research, and furthermore, the individual participants felt acknowledged and satisfied to reflect so deeply about their work as art teachers. Likewise, the practice of a/r/tography is uniquely aligned with my talents and strengths as an artist/researcher/teacher, and I believe this methodology leveraged my strengths as a scholar and researcher.
**About the Researcher**

I sensed the tension and duality of my identity from an early age. I never fully belonged to any group in high school or college, and that feeling has persisted since starting my career. When I graduated from high school, I lacked a sense of self. I had not yet formed the stories of my life. I knew that I excelled in school, and that I enjoyed a blend of academics and visual arts, but I was unsure of what to pursue. My road to becoming an artist-researcher-teacher was windy and rocky. In fact, it has taken me ten years of my adult life to even call myself an artist because I did not perceive my own creative and artistic ability as legitimate.

As I look back, it is obvious how I have vacillated between my artist-teacher-researcher identities constantly. I attended art school, but received a degree in visual and critical studies, which literally allowed me to be a half-time artist and a half-time academic, the best of both worlds. Eventually, I received my Masters in art and design education, which consecrated my teacher identity. Then, I took jobs where I played various roles as arts administrator, art teacher, teaching artist, and art education curriculum developer.

Reflecting on my time as an art teacher, I often felt torn as to which side of that title was more dominant. Was it the artist side or the teacher side? Did one have to dominate and what happened when they were balanced? At other times of my career, I was not an art teacher, but a teaching artist. What was the difference between an art teacher and a teaching artist? Why did society perceive them differently? Ironically, by transposing these two words it conveys an altogether different type of professional identity.
For years, I covertly self-identified as an artist/researcher/teacher, among other titles, before I found that the term a/r/tography existed. Of my own accord, sometime around 2010, I actually started listing my identities together on letterhead and job applications with “/” or “*” marks trying to communicate the multiple aspects of myself. “I am not just a teacher,” I thought, “I’m an artist, teacher, designer, researcher, and scholar, but how do I convey the multiple sides of myself?”

At this point of my professional career, I see hybridity and connection in all my work, studies, and art making. Knowing, doing, and making (Irwin, 2004) are the processes that influence all of my work. In my professional world, there is no such thing as being an administrator one moment without also being a teacher and creator, or similarly, being a student without also being a researcher, and designer. My identities are varied and integrated, and through these overlapping spaces, I bring new voice, fresh perspective, and openness to other kinds of understanding.

I believe my experience of multiple professional identities is not unique, but that it pervades the profession of teaching. Many educators are unaware of their multiple professional identities largely because they have been trained by society to compartmentalize, focusing on only one or two identities, and teacher education programs do not often ask teachers to reflect on their identities beyond race, class, and gender. Artists, creatives, and especially art educators may be the exceptions.

Artists are good at inquiring, asking more questions than giving answers, looking for possibilities where others see none, and redefining what is considered conventional, and this is why I am studying the multiple professional identities of art teachers. I think art teachers understand, appreciate, and represent (Irwin, 2004) their world through more
identities than just being an artist and a teacher. An individual may also self-identify as a professional chef, street artist, clown, or musician, which undoubtedly impacts some element(s) of his or her work in the classroom.

The spaces in between multiple professional identities create a “flow between intellect, feeling, and practice [and] works of art created in this thirdness hold great promise,” (Irwin, 2004, p. 29). This promise is due to the profound integration and aesthetic experiences that intellect, feeling, and practice brings to life. In the interstitial spaces, my professional self and expertise are fully engaged. How and where professional identities intersect and what this means for teaching and learning are the kinds of questions that keep me up at night, causing me to reflect on my own identity as well as ask the same of my colleagues, making them reconsider the notions of their professional identity. In the end, more questions than answers will be uncovered, a mark of the ambiguity and openings this type of research promotes.
Chapter Four: Findings from the Spaces In Between

Exploring Art Teacher Professional Identity

I am sitting in a room at home where the walls are decorated in chart paper along with artwork made by my research participants. The only audible sounds are the participant’s voices as I replay interviews over and over, pausing, reflecting, playing, pausing, and reflecting. I stand, sharpie marker in hand, and draw lines between objects and add notations as insights enter my mind. In silence, slumped back in my chair, the evening light grows darker, and while I gaze at the words on the wall and the images in the artwork, I wonder what it all means. What am I hearing beneath the literal stories of these participants and how does it fold together? My researcher imagination, a term used by Geertz (as cited in Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), is slowly compiling these ingredients into a tapestry of stories that depicts identity in a way it has not yet been represented through research.

This chapter is where words and images “paint a likeness” to “bring us in touch with the lives of strangers” (Geertz, 1973, as cited in Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 8), and, where hopefully, the spaces between professional identities are stretched and pried to make apparent the blurrings and liminalities (Springgay et al., 2008) of identity. Identity is a difficult concept to discuss since there are so many dimensions to it, many of which are hidden or obscured to the participants themselves. Even more so, it is
challenging to deconstruct and reconstruct identity through the intersections of aesthetics and empiricism (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 6).

This chapter is divided into six sections consisting of one section on the group participants and five sections on the individual participants (see Table 2), one for each person. To illuminate the data, the group participants are described first, followed by the individual participants who are discussed in order of their years of teaching experience to allow for comparison of professional identity development and perception with Kegan’s (1982) framework on evolution of self. Being an a/r/tographer, I use a combination of images, creative writing, education-based interpretations, and research to portray the findings.

Table 2: Individual Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art Teacher Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
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<td>35</td>
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</table>

Each section begins with portraiture, attending to the atmosphere, setting, and descriptions of the participants to carefully document this process of investigation. Furthermore, it evokes the character and complexities of the lived experiences of the participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). After the portraits, I use the research
questions to explore the stories, art making, and artifacts collected from the participants. Finally, I analyze these representations and findings in each section through a/r/tographic renderings framed by devices used by Surrealist artists and Kegan’s (1982) evolution of self. Again, renderings are the themes found within the data and can be created however the a/r/tographer chooses, since there is no established set of renderings in a/r/tography.

**Group Participants**

After two months of preparing and instructing the group on this research project, tonight is the night the group participants share their metaphorical representations of their professional identity and verbalize what professional identity means to them. In September, I introduced this research study to the group participants for the first time and their solicited participation, and then in October, they began making their metaphorical representations with various artistic supplies. Now, it is November, and the participants are bringing the metaphorical representations they completed to our meeting so that we may have a rich discussion on professional identity and compare how each person in the group experiences being a teacher and an artist, among their other professional identities.

The group participants belong to Meaning Makers⁴, a gathering of art teachers who meet once a month after school for an hour during the school year. The teachers come from different schools across a metropolitan city in the western United States, and represent at least three different school districts and one university. Fourteen of the 20 members agreed to participate in the study. Meaning Makers has been in existence since 2012 and was formed as a type of research group for art teachers who desire to connect around and discuss topics of art and art education alongside art theory and practice.

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⁴ All names are pseudonyms
While nibbling on crackers and cheese and sipping wine, we discuss shifts in contemporary art and how to rethink our teaching to embrace substantive concepts in the art room with our students of all ages. I say we because I am a member of this group. I joined two years ago, but was not an active participant last year. I have rejoined, but this time, I am leading the focus and activities for the first three meetings because it supports my research and it aligns to the types of conversations and ideas that this group thrives upon.

To clarify, Meaning Makers are not traditional art teachers, and they do not promote crafts and cookie cutter projects borrowed from pages of art teacher magazines. Instead, this is a tribe of art teachers who strive to elevate the practice of teaching art to a higher level, heavily inspired by intellectual concepts and theories that augment their content and pedagogy. Even though this group is part support group and part networking group, overall, it is a group of practitioners who find solace and kinship in being with other practitioners, especially those who rebel against traditional educational systems and structures. Together, these teachers challenge each other on their philosophies of art education along with building advocacy for the importance of art to the lives of students and society. In many ways, this group protests the hypocrisy of traditional art education, and focuses on art’s power as a form of political, social, and personal expression.

As I arrive for the November meeting, I am carrying a digital SLR camera, a tripod, a video camera, handouts, and, of course, snacks. Since it is a weeknight, the street traffic is slower, and the storefronts across the street display artwork in their windows, enticing passersby to enter the galleries located in this arts district. The double glass doors are unlocked, I ease myself through the entryway, briefly glancing at the
flyers and handouts for upcoming art shows and cultural events across the city. My hands grab the next set of doors, and I enter the main room where a reception desk awaits.

It is after hours. The room is empty, but I notice that a new exhibition has recently been installed. I feel as if I walked into a cabinet of curiosities each time I visit this building. The landscape changes every few weeks, and for a visual artist, attending galleries is my eye candy. I am always intrigued to see what strange colors, foreign objects, or wild details will jump out and grab my attention, burning unforeseen ideas into my mind’s eye.

Not having much time, I peer to my right and to my left while walking about 25 paces until I reach the back of the gallery. There are a couple dividing walls that create a main corridor, but for the most part, the room is wide open, tall, and spacious. There is even a wall of windows on the street side, making the boundary of spaces feel both inside and outside. At this time, night has fallen and the glow of street lamps cast their light into the room. I hear the click of my shoes as they strike the floor, and then I stop as I near the back corner of the gallery where the education studio resides.

The education studio is set next to a storage room, small kitchen area, a few offices, and another storage area. The studio is large enough to fit 20 people comfortably and is a windowless box with minimal decor. Inside, the room is neat. Four rectangular folding tables fit tightly against the walls, and black chairs with tall backs are positioned around each table. The shortest wall has cabinets and some counter space with a sink; the opposite wall contains a supply closet. I set down my materials and begin arranging my handouts, but quickly move to setting up food. It is typical for people to snack, drink,
and talk for the first 15 to 20 minutes of the meeting, a welcome respite from the
workday and a time to socialize. One of the Meaning Maker group leaders assists me as
we move the food table into the corridor to make an area for socializing. She grabs a
wine opener while I lay out napkins and plates. We have a nice rhythm and routine, and
things fall easily into place.

One at a time, the group members start to arrive, some dropping their bags in the
studio and then getting food, others stopping at the food area first and asking each other
about their days. The teachers are dressed casually; one wears grey tights and red clogs,
another a black and white striped shirt, a couple have scarves wrapped around their
necks, and another has blue hair. Ages range from early twenties, a few are just finishing
art education programs, and others are in their late forties and early fifties, having taught
for their entire careers. For the most part, the members are female except for one male in
attendance this evening.

We are the only people in the gallery, and we fill the education studio with lots of
energy and liveliness. As the top of the hour approaches, I ask the group to take seats and
skim the handout explaining the evening’s activities. An agenda and typed protocol
guide the flow and order of discussion so each group can be self-paced, and I am released
to observe, take notes, and keep track of time. I separate everyone into two small groups,
one of six and the other of seven since one person is late to arrive, and I ask that the
participants begin by placing their metaphorical representations of their professional
identity in the center of the table to form a mini art gallery.

A bulldog, a city map, a girl in a yoga pose, a deconstructed book, an arctic
landscape, and scribbled words are some of the features that capture my eyes as I scan the
representations on the table. From a cursory glance, most of the artworks are collages made from cutout pictures in magazines, a quick method for composing visual meaning without much effort in drawing or rendering. However, there are a few that take other forms—an artist book, a paper sculpture in the shape of a basket, and a type of window made with layers of transparency paper. Collectively, there is much imagery condensed into these artworks, most no larger than 12 inches in width or length. I could spend an entire research paper unpacking the significance of each.

The room becomes quiet, some of the participants stand to lean in and look more closely, others pick up the artwork and gaze at it in their hands (see Figure 2). For this first activity, I ask them to look at the entirety of the pieces as if they belonged together in a collection. What unites the metaphorical representations as a body of work? What elements and ideas carry across all of the representations on the table?

![Figure 2. Group participants in small group activity.](image-url)
The rationale for beginning this way is to have participants look at the metaphorical representations as a collection of visual data and to extract categories and themes before eliciting personal explanations, which may or may not bias the initial interpretations of the group. The pattern for the group discussion activities are designed to move in an analysis spiral (Creswell, 2013) from overall groupings of ideas, to detailed individual reflections, and then to a full group discussion of meanings and comparisons heard and seen across the representations. As an a/r/tographer, I am engaging the group participants in the inquiry process (Springgay et al., 2008) as well as observing as they circle around central topics and themes, in turn, it becomes a way to triangulate findings by comparing my analysis with the group analysis and the metaphorical representations themselves (Creswell, 2013).

There is an intense focus in the room. Before entering into a verbal discussion, I ask participants to capture their thoughts on post-it notes, noticing details about composition, materials, and imagery, but also acting as a form of written data. After a few minutes of silent, individual reflections and interpretations, I ask the two groups to share aloud in their groups, and read the post-it notes. In a matter of moments, I begin to hear identical words spoken as I move between groups:

- “Lots of color”, “Colorful”
- “Variety of materials, opacity, elements”, “Diverse”
- “Multiple points of focus”, “Hectic and unfocused”
- “Nonlinear”, “Makes me feel busy and overwhelmed”, “Ambiguous”
Some of the unique phrases I hear are:

- “Collection of work reminds me of advertisements like I’m being sold something I need”
- “Self as many”
- “Meta meta meta. What does it all mean?”

Then, the sharing progresses to discussion, and the participants build off of each other’s noticings and wonderings. For instance, when an art teacher hears a comment about the collection of representations being busy yet connected, she responds with, “That also says something specifically to me about the personality that’s required to teach. You know, like the bee in the beehive,” and another teacher chimes in, “Yeah. The busyness and overwhelmingness. That’s what we thrive on, especially in the art room more than any other classroom.”

In the other group, a young teacher states, “When I look at these, I identify with all of them a little bit,” and then she points to a sketch with a girl in the middle (see Appendix B, Figure 8) and exclaims, “Me too! It was nice to see that even though there’s this huge variety, there’s a lot of commonalities between them.” A different teacher points to a post-it where someone wrote the word schizophrenia, and everyone erupts into laughter, seeming to empathize with the sentiment and the collective feeling.

Returning as a whole group, I ask participants to recount what they heard and shared in their small group discussions. Generally, they agree that those who made collages wrestled with the medium of collage because it was not their typical style, and acknowledge that the format of collage has a tendency of looking and feeling busier than other forms of art, thus potentially the medium impacted or manipulated some of the
ideas the participants were attempting to express. Aside from the technical constraints of
the art making, deeper ideas surface, and the group agrees that layering is a common
element. To be an art teacher, one must possess a complexity that is not outwardly
apparent.

One participant states:

I feel like being an artist and a teacher is almost two opposite things in that way.
One is a real solitary endeavor and one is that craziness, and we’re all trying to
get to that here, that duality between the two.

Variations of the words chaos and mellowness are discussed, which expresses the
juxtaposition of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors the group says they experience in their
work. The metaphorical representations display images that do not fit neatly together, yet
they coexist in the daily practice of these art teachers.

In the next activity, I ask the teachers to reveal what they made and why they
made it, taking turns showing and telling. However, I add the constraint that the artist is
not allowed to reveal her ideas for the first few moments, instead, the viewers must
interpret what they see and interpret its meaning before hearing the explanation from the
artist. My purpose for this is two-fold. First, it requires the viewers to engaged deeply
and investigate the visual details carefully to uncover a variety of possible meanings, and
second, as soon as the artist discloses her thoughts and purpose, bias, judgment, and
convergence of ideas naturally occurs (Lehrer, 2012a), which limits the unseen and
imaginative associations that might otherwise occur and bring other undiscovered
insights to the analysis. To open the spaces in-between professional identity, inquiry is
an essential element of a/r/tography (Springgagy et al., 2008), so I tried to support and encourage inquiry practices as much as possible with the group participants.

To provide an example of how this activity worked, one art teacher holds up an artwork (see Figure 3), which depicts three rectangular photographs of landscapes side by side. The left frame contains the ocean during a sunny day with the demolished remains of an aircraft jutting out, the middle frame contains the tops of snow-covered peaks just before dawn, and the right frame depicts an astronaut walking on a lunar surface. Most notably, pasted off-center in the sky, is the head of a pilot wearing aviator glasses and staring boldly into the sunlight, his face bathed in an orange glow. The other group participants blurt out their thoughts at random, words and sentences running into each other like a muddled stream of thought. The voices of five interpretations become one:

- It looks like a solo pilot, solo travel, and the landscape is barren…Exploration to new territories. He’s on his own. Looks like the plane crashed. Maybe that pilot was taking a flight on earth? I keep wanting to read it left to right. Exploration to territories unknown, crashing and burning… the statutes, um, I’m not sure how those play in yet. It looks like something traditional with something crazy on top, so there’s this combining of older and newer ideas. There’s something in the environment for me, so I’m wondering if that’s maybe like who you are as an artist or something about…or the opposite, like if you’re teaching 3-dimensional work… they seem to be somewhat separate from the landscape. I wonder about that, is that like a juxtaposition? I find something hopeful about the pilot [laughter]. Yeah, he’s kind of, you know, facing it, whatever it is. It’s an optimistic thing, a heroic sort of stance…I really like the landscape, like the water
flows into the mountain in the background and the snowfield in the front. [Artist interrupts and says, “That was intentional”]. It’s really nice.

Figure 3. Metaphorical representation of professional identity created by a group participant.

As the participants look at the collage, it is apparent there is neither a starting point nor ending point. Interpretation begins anywhere, and likewise, the longer everyone looks at the representation, the more details and nuances are brought to everyone’s attention. The photographic images take on multiple meanings due to their placement, and the boundaries of objects blur together as they are set beside and on top of others to form a whole composition. Somehow, everything relates to everything else, some aspects are intentional while others perhaps are not. With the passing of time, more wonderings arise than conclusions are drawn. Participants comment when they are
confused or unsure of certain meanings, and then other participants jump in with their thoughts.

From these metaphorical representations, the fluidity and multiplicity of professional identity is made apparent more so then through verbal discussion alone. The seemingly simple medium of collage, artworks composed of cutup images glued together, allows the mind to comprehend and internalize more symbolism than what words can actually express. The metaphorical representation in Figure 3 depicts how this art teacher perceives his professional identity in a way that portrays multiple layers of meaning, and while the other participants perceive certain aspects quite accurately, there are elements they do not fully understand or missed altogether.

There is a brief pause and someone asks, “Do you want to reveal?” and the artist explains his rationale:

A lot of you all hit on a lot of the things I was trying to get across. With the statues, I’m not sure those are working quite as well as I thought. What I was latching onto with those was the abstractness, how I deal with abstract things in my photography. Macro photography is what I like to do. Cutting these out, I was thinking over my attention to detail sometimes, that’s what I was thinking through...I don’t know if they’re integrating with the rest of it quite as well. Yes, I’m going into my second year of teaching right now so it was definitely exploring new territory here. I’m the only art teacher out of a 500 kid, IB, Title 1 school. Yeah, just feeling like I’m on my own to some degree. This [pointing to the aviator image] was more of the persona that I feel like I have to put on a lot of the time. The calm, “everything’s okay, I’m doing it” kind of face. It does feel
sometimes like this huge new territory. This is a new job for me. This is a whole new career. It does feel open, even kind of barren sometimes. This shows that the water always feels [gestures with his hand like water is rising by his neck] like it’s up in this neighborhood, and I do feel like I’ve kind of crashed and burned, and other times it’s exciting and new things to do.

He finishes his train of thought, smiles, and thanks everyone for being so insightful.

Teacher after teacher moves through this process of sharing by allowing the other teachers to interpret the artwork first.

In another example, one of the last people to share is an art teacher who has been teaching for over thirty years (See Figure 4). Her metaphorical representation is an asymmetrical, 3-dimensional paper sculpture in the shape of a basket with a thick handle. The exterior is decorated in a diamond-checked pattern. The words ring master, supply monitor, guide, sage, leader, consultant, art director, counselor, teacher, and a few others appear on the sides of the basket. The short side contains a repurposed piece of packaging taken from an antique set of ABC Stamps, and her business card dangles from the handle of the basket attached by a red ribbon and the number 30 pasted on the reverse side. Inside the basket, there are three images, two pasted on the sides and one pasted on the bottom. The bottom one covers the entire length and width of the basket and resembles a primitive a mask. The structure is sturdy and the edges are crisply folded like an origami sculpture.
The other art teachers take turns touching, peering into, and rotating the basket to see all of its sides. As the teachers examine the object, they begin saying:

It’s interesting, it reminds me of a picnic basket…I love that you have to interact with the piece. I think teaching is such an interaction. Even having this picture, it drew me in with the little girl, that sweet innocence, I wanted to look, and then I think “oh, there’s something else inside”…different angles and different perspectives. I like how it seems like a centerpiece on a table with your card. To me it has like old children’s toys, which I love. At the Smithsonian, they had children’s toys from the early 1800s, so beautiful. You knew that the toy designer was thinking about a child instead of thinking about commercialization. The image on the inside upset me. So what’s the couple, is it a reflection on aging? Possibly?

The artist interrupts and comments, “I’ve been teaching for 30 years.” And another teacher jokes, “I thought you were only 30 years old.” The group giggles and the artist says, “Actually, I’ve been teaching for 36, but I found this card in the collage box and it’s close enough.”
From there, she leads into her explanation:

I had this piece [the antique packaging] and I liked it and I just wanted to use it. I decided I didn’t want it to be symmetrical because most of it is who do I need to be right in the moment. So, I thought it kind of looked like a party basket like you see at a birthday party. And, I just have all these different jobs I do all day, and I’m thinking more about retirement now so I’ve got this little couple walking down because I’ve got three more years to go. Then this thing is beads for lanterns. Teachers give light, kind of my teacher symbol. It’s kind of like you light the way. Actually last week, we had parent conferences, and it’s emotional, and I started thinking about my role as a counselor and therapist not just to my kids but to parents.

The group goes silent, apparently digesting and internalizing her explanation. Obviously, the basket is a metaphor for many components of this art teacher’s experiences, not only does she have many sides of her professional identity, but personal and emotional aspects are embedded within her imagery and composition.

The time for reflection and interpretation dwindles, and I encourage the participants to conclude their small group conversations so that we can segue into a final debrief. Overhearing one participant’s final comment about being caught between identities and using coping mechanisms, I cast this idea back to the entire group. How do others move back and forth between their identities? What does this tension feel like?

Responses build upon one another:

Teacher 1: I choose what I wanna do. Like I might be told 1,000 things, and I’m fully aware I can’t do 1,000. I choose ten. Sometimes I know it’s because
someone’s gonna check up on it, sometimes it’s because it’s what’s gonna feed my soul. I can’t do them all.

Teacher 2: I like to go into pretend world. One of my coping mechanisms is to go into an imaginary world, and like pretend. For example, when I was volunteering at the animal sanctuary, they had me mopping out the veterinary clinic. The whole time I was in there I was pretending to be a veterinarian and all this stuff…like these silly stories, I sort of pop those in, play like a little movie about it in my head. I find that when I do that with the kids, it’s really effective because they can relate to that sense of imagination and it keeps me from getting too caught up in reality, of the district.

Teacher 3: I think being a student is one way I cope. Taking classes every summer, and what’s interesting, because I’m a teacher, one of the things I get from the classes is how to teach and not so much the thing I’m taking the class for but noticing other strategies and things the teacher’s doing or not doing with the class I’m in. That’s something I added to my piece just today because I realized that, hopefully we’re all lifelong learners.

Teacher 4: I think being an artist is the best preparation. I wonder how other teachers actually manage [giggles emerge in the background] because you’ve had practice and practice and practice of knowing what’s going to work, what’s not going to work, and you just keep on working, or you’re just like in this uncomfortable like, “aahhhhh” and you’ve been practicing that, but it’s not necessarily a comfortable thing but you’re used to like being able to go in many
directions at one time and many ways you’re just problem solving piece by piece and moving in different directions.

Time is running out for the evening’s session, and I pose a final question for the full group discussion, “What did this experience make you realize or think more about in terms of your professional identity?” The answers become contemplative and serious. One teacher explains that she felt it was permissible to allow her personal identity to seep in, connect with, and alter her professional identity and that was something she did not believe was acceptable earlier in her career. Another teacher realized it was okay to still be in process of forming his identity because he would always be multifaceted. When thinking about the students, a teacher felt it was good for students to see lots of kinds of people and see them as complicated, and that teachers can be even better teachers when they acknowledge all the different parts of their self within being a teacher.

One teacher references Shea Hembrey’s TED Talk How I became 100 Artists because it made her think about teaching. In grades K-8, art teachers oftentimes provide the only art experience that students receive, so the art teacher is forced to create the richness of 100 different artists, even shifting hour to hour as classes change each period. Another teacher reminds the group that artists are supposed to have a consistent body of work, but then asks why? Does that mean that teachers need to have a consistent body of work as well? To which, another teacher counters that if a teacher is being consistent and true to her authentic self, then that is the thread that will consistently tie the work together regardless. She finishes her thought by saying, “I think teaching is an art all by itself, so it’s at least our second artist that we are because it’s creating environments and humans and lessons.” This resonates with another teacher who adds, “When you step back and
you look at it [your teaching] over a period of 8 years or 9 years, that’s when you…realize something happened there that I never saw before.” This prompts another teacher to comment that when any of the multifaceted elements of professional identity are out of balance, it creates an uncomfortable space. Balance is a necessary component to make one’s identity work. Being 100 different kinds of artists, having a consistent body of work as an artist or as a teacher, finding the through line of one’s authentic self, and balancing identities in order to minimize the chaotic and uncomfortable spaces of some identity intersections, are the key messages that the group debates and ponders in the final moments of our meeting.

As participants slowly filter out of the room, many mingling and sharing further thoughts with each other, I am struck by how profound and impactful the evening has been for me. The participants revealed so much about themselves, and they opened up, and told stories I have never heard them share. As I pick up the metaphorical representations and skim through the post-it note comments, I know I have collected only a bird’s eye view of the landscape that encompasses art teacher professional identity. Now, I must dig deeper and process what the representations, discussion topics, and personal commentaries mean.

**Renderings from the Group Participants**

In a/r/tography, renderings are used to process concepts and attend to the unrealized aspects between and among identities (Springgay et al., 2008). Since Surrealists used specific devices to unite conscious and unconscious realities, Surrealist devices are applied to render the findings from this study (see Appendix D). The devices
that seem most appropriate for the findings from the group participants are misnaming of objects and paradox.

The idea of misnaming objects or objects not appearing as they seem aligns well with the ideas shared by the group participants. Even though an idea is represented by a word, a word is merely a symbol and is not the thing itself. Therefore, words are often insufficient when talking about identity and only provide an incomplete picture of the thing or concept being described. During the group discussion, there were substantial musings around the complexity of being a teacher, and specifically an art teacher, which is why it was difficult for the participants what the complexities were and how to describe the layers that they felt in their work.

Job titles and even the word teacher were inadequate for the participants to articulate what underlies their lived experiences as teachers. One teacher stated:

There’s just a complexity to it [teaching] that’s beyond what anyone could imagine if you are not a teacher, and that’s a big problem because we have such a stigma [about teachers].

The art teachers seemed to accept that multiple identities make up who they are, an idea that was reinforced by watching their heads nod in silent agreement. Furthermore, when the group participants shared their metaphorical representations, participants frequently used the word things, as in, “I notice all these things over here” or “I used these things” to reference that for which they did not have names.

There was also discussion around the dichotomies that exist in teaching and in being an art teacher. Teachers grappled with how to explain the ways in which they balanced their opposing identities. For instance, one teacher spoke about going into a
pretend world as a coping mechanism to relate to her students while she was also instilling knowledge and employing instructional practices. Others talked about the demands of their jobs, and how they were expected to do many things and be 100 different kinds of artists. On the surface, art teachers may appear to be teachers, but underneath, they are managing and minimizing the tensions between the contradictory needs of students, parents, and administrators. These elements highlight the paradoxical nature of professional identity because professional identities do not all fit neatly together and often contradict one another.

Another way paradoxes appeared was in the descriptions of the metaphorical representations. Participants noted that they looked visually messy and busy, portraying the tension, conflict, and chaos that arises from trying to visually represent one’s identities, yet no attached a label to the messiness other than describing the need for balance, both literally and figuratively. Likewise, the term *layers* was repeatedly used by the participants. The term *layers* may be both a misnaming of the intersectionalities between professional identities and an acknowledgement of opposing parts. Since layers of identity do not necessarily lay neatly atop one another, rather, at some point, layers merge into one another. Perhaps what the teachers were truly calling attention to were the inter- and intra-categorical relationships (McCall, 2005) between their identities that they inherently sensed within their work but did not know how to better name this concept.

**Conclusion**

The teacher accounts remind me of the vastness of teachers’ professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996), and how teachers situate their
personal and professional knowledge through stories. In this case, both stories and
metaphorical representations illustrated and illuminated the experiences teachers have in
their professional lives, and how they have come to know and form their professional
identity (Craig, 1999). The group activities enabled the art teachers to demonstrate and
uncover different ways of knowing their professional selves, supported through visual,
oral, and written acts of reflection, which helped elicit parallels between their
professional identities and experiences.

Although, the group participants did not specifically define the term professional
identity during our group discussion, nor did they concretely identify intersections of
their professional identity overlaps, they still uncovered common elements of art teacher
professional identity, and they acknowledged the complexities they both feel and observe
in their identities. In sum, the group participants struggled to explain all of the rich
elements existing among and between their professional identities. It is important to
recognize that language, in the context of identity research, may be valueless to describe
the full experience one lives in their identity, and that over a period of time, one becomes
better able to reflect upon, observe, and witness the common elements that comprise
one’s professional identity. In the next section, I will explore how the five individual
participants discussed and performed their professional identities through classroom
observations, formal interviews, and artifacts from their teaching to shed more detail on
this phenomenon.
Chapter Four: Findings from the Spaces In Between

1. Tom Abbott

   Portrait of Tom

   When I arrive at his classroom, Tom is standing in front of a counter shuffling papers into an orderly pile. “I just have to do some cleanup before the Boys and Girls Club comes in afterschool,” he tells me as he gestures for me to enter. I ask if he needs any assistance, noticing debris from an earlier art project. “You don’t have to,” he says, but I grab some paper towels and start helping anyway.

   His art room is spacious, fifty students could easily fit inside of it, and because the overhead lights are not turned on at the moment, the room has a cavernous feeling. Only a glimpse of natural light streams in through the windows on the far wall. The room is deep and wide with relatively high ceilings, track lighting and fluorescent lighting systems, and pipes with shutoff valves hanging down at intervals, ostensibly designed for activities other than what the room is currently being used. There are large wooden tables pushed together to form eight seating areas, each surrounded by bucket style chairs made of a tan colored plastic on top of shiny metal legs.

   Outside of the art room, there is a wall-sized, glass display case filled with recent student work. Inside the room, there is plenty of storage located around the room—cabinets, drawers, shelves, tall closets, and drying racks. Supplies, projects, and papers are neatly tucked away out of sight. A large industrial double washbasin is located
against a dividing wall, behind which there is an area dedicated to wheel throwing with eight foot-powered throwing wheels, yet Tom is not well versed in clay and is reluctant to let the students use them thus far. Overall, the room is stark—grey floors, white walls made of concrete modular blocks, minimal student work on display in the room (probably due to the material of the walls), and a few art posters and signs hung about.

Together, Tom and I tackle the places where plaster dust piles and hardened blobs formed on the counter, leftover from a current assignment. After each pass of the paper towel and sponge, a thin white film reappears, requiring repeated wiping to eliminate the evidence. “We were using plaster to make their chibi sculptures,” he tells me, “Some of the students like making them but others don’t like the plaster, maybe it’s the messiness or the texture.” The early stages of the chibi sculptures stand lined up on shelves like 6” tall aliens, big orbs for heads and small cylindrical bodies awaiting their orders. The sculptures are a lesson on form and culture for the Art Around the World class he teaches. Students are tasked with creating an original chibi (Japanese word for cute or short) sculpture in a dynamic pose.

Cleaning the remains of the plaster reminds me of being in the sculpture studio at college. I can empathize with Tom’s middle school students who are adverse to this media since I used to dread adding water to plaster because the moment they touch, a fine powder blasts into the air like steam, forming an itchy dust cloud until the ingredients are thoroughly incorporated. I am not sure how well I would have reacted to using plaster in middle school.

We finish cleaning up and move into Tom’s office in the adjacent room to begin our conversation about his professional identity. Bright fluorescent lights make his office
shine like a gleaming white box. There are no windows, just white concrete modular block walls, a grey countertop that forms a u-shape along three walls, and two aging, mismatched office chairs on wheels. Neatly stacked piles of paper, books, boxes of pencils, and office equipment are spread about the counter, and the walls are mostly empty aside from a print of an artwork, the school schedule, the school phone directory, and a bulletin board with three drawings done by students, most of which are on lined notebook paper along with a few other important documents.

We move the chairs to face each other, and Tom leans back and props his left ankle over his right knee, exposing his black work boots and steel grey cargo pants that bunch up as he sits. He places his left elbow on the armrest while his right hand rests in his lap. Tom is wearing a forest green buttoned down shirt and has three lanyards hanging around his neck—two are bathroom hall passes for his students, one is his staff ID card and key. Eleven starfish shaped pins run up one side of his ID lanyard and on the other side are different school pride pins. Tom’s short, sandy brown hair is a bit mussed and a couple tendrils lay against his forehead. He sports a trim goatee and has a slim build, and when he talks, his voice is calm and gentle, although a bit tired sounding after a long day of teaching.

At 35 years old, Tom is entering his second year as an art teacher and proudly acknowledges that he is the first art teacher to stay for more than a year in the past five years. He teaches at Benton Middle School, an International Baccalaureate school in a large suburban school district where student mobility rates are high as well as the percentage of those who qualify for free and reduced lunch. Tom teaches grades 7 and 8, and sees up to 210 students on an A/B schedule in this high-needs school.
To understand Tom better as a teacher and to get a glimpse of his study body, I observed him teaching a few days prior. I noticed students frequently speaking in Spanish and calling for his attention by saying *mister*. For instance, “Mister, I messed mine up bad,” and Tom attended to these calls by moving back and forth from table to table, spending the majority of his time trying to motivate students to stay on task, asking them to take initiative for the art making process, and redirecting students back to their seats. As he negotiated who needed his help most, he also monitored behavior and strategized how to meet the needs of each student. Tom barely rested or stopped to examine the full classroom environment for most of the time I was there. It made me realize how tired he must become after a day of work and how challenging it must be for him to divide himself amongst the competing interests of his students.

As a new teacher, it is apparent that Tom is still figuring out his strategies and teaching style. Some of the assignments he is uses, like the chibi sculptures, are borrowed from his mentors, as he told me he has yet to build his repertoire. Juggling classroom management is not only an area of stress that I witnessed during my visit, but Tom verbally concurs that this is the part of his job that he finds most difficult. He even mentions that he would have preferred more classroom management preparation in his teacher education program instead of educational theory.

In fact, classroom management is such a source of discomfort for Tom, that during his interview, he brought it up a few times, reflecting on how he struggles to build behavioral structures and scaffolds for his students. He even admitted that when he goes home at night, his mind is frequently occupied by the warm-up exercise for the following day. This is because he knows that the first few minutes of class-time set the tone for the
entire period, and he wants to use that time carefully. He explained the challenge to me in this way:

I’m trying to find this balance between where I can still make it clear what the expectation is and even give them a choice… I don’t know if I can say much more other than I’m trying to find this balance and not letting it bother me too much and not being a total authoritarian, but at the same time not letting them have their way either. It’s a very ambiguous, organic kind of thing I’m finding almost on a day-to-day basis- on a case-by-case scenario. I don’t like that in some ways because it starts to look inconsistent.

Although Tom is finding his way through the early stages of his teaching career, he also demonstrates a love for the work and provides positive feedback when students follow instructions and create quality work. “There we go, excellent,” I hear him encourage, “One thing you’re going to do now is take the next step, you can try something like I did, you don’t have to do exactly what I did…let me see your rough draft here. Excellent, rotate that around two more times,” and then, in that brief moment of guidance, Tom gets interrupted and has to move on to the next student. Through this glimpse of observing Tom teach, and by spending time with him in his classroom, I begin to get a sense of how Tom acts as a teacher and what he thinks about himself as a teacher. To open up the aspects that cannot be observed and are not tangible, I ask Tom to tell me more about his professional identity so that other spaces are revealed for this research.

**Defining Tom’s Professional Identity**

Tom’s explanation of professional identity is that it is “who you are and how you conduct yourself in your place of business.” He identifies himself as a teacher and adds
that in the role of a teacher, “It’s all generally one hat, but there are a lot of little hats, it seems like, inside of this one big hat of being a teacher.” Tom explains that his other roles involve having relationships with students where he tries to provide assistance without overly enabling them. He also identifies that he tries to partake in leadership opportunities at the school such as participating in professional learning communities, and he has even been selected to participate in a leadership group at his school. In addition to his teacher identity, and having little roles within his teacher role, he acknowledges being a photographer as another of his professional identities.

As far as what led him to his career path, Tom remembers a desire to become an artist at some point in middle school because of his interest in comic books and movies. In high school, he had a transformational experience in a black and white photography class that ignited his love for photo and compelled him to pursue his BFA in photography. At one point, he even had a dream of returning to his high school to start a photography program there. After college, he sought a job at a camera store, persistently contacting the manager until he was eventually offered a position. He worked there for ten years, since he loved photography, and became assistant manager after two years. Tom shifted into teaching when he started to think about retirement and shaping a career. His goal is to be a high school photo teacher, but those jobs are not easy to come by.

**Intersections of Tom’s Professional Identities**

In the interview, we discussed Tom’s identity as an artist, and he explained with exacting detail what type of photographer he is (macro and abstract), and what types of subject matter fascinate him (natural elements, water, and glass). To better understand
his keen photographer’s eye, he provides a description of his perception, and how he notices specific details in everyday objects:

I’ll be sitting at dinner with somebody at a restaurant, and I’ll just notice the way the light’s going through their glass and casting this crazy reflection onto the table, and the interesting patterns it makes and things like that.

As a concrete example of how these details feed his art making, Tom created a body of work titled *Innerstellar* for his undergraduate thesis. The title was *Innerstellar* because it captured the personal and spiritual growth that Tom was undergoing. At that time, he was having profound realizations about life, light, and the workings of the universe, and *Innerstellar* was a personal project about discovering himself and his beliefs. Tom’s work was both introspective and a macrocosm of his experiences up to that time. At some level, it was his attempt to bridge the two realities.

In his thesis work, he manipulated vases filled with water where he focused on them so closely with his camera that he captured the light reflecting off of watermarks and fingerprints to form galaxies and celestial images (see figure 5). It intrigued Tom because, “this is something that’s right here under our noses all the time but you don’t stop to notice it…I wanted to do something that you can read more into, that’s a little more open to interpretation.” It is evident that Tom not only appreciates details, but also has a particular ability for finding the hidden beauty within the smallest of regions.
Figure 5. Photography by Tom for his BFA thesis exhibition

With his camera, Tom is able to enlarge spaces and objects and heighten our awareness of them. As a photographer, Tom investigates what lies between normal human vision, and the microscopic world, causing his viewer to see things they would have never seen without the macro photographs he created. Tom genuinely appreciates changing perspective, looking at things in new ways, and sharing his re-interpretations of ordinary objects with a wider audience.

The photographer qualities outlined above are also present in aspects of Tom’s teacher identity. For instance, when Tom describes a lesson he has thus far only dreamed of teaching, it shares many of the attributes he is passionate about as a photographer. Tom envisions one day teaching a biometric self-portrait assignment for a digital media art class. The concept is that students would learn about facial recognition technology
that maps the geometry of a person’s face, and from there, students would create a self-portrait by layering maps on top of their own faces through the use of a program such as Adobe Photoshop. This project captures Tom’s interest with light and embedding details within details. By layering maps upon a person’s face, there is an inherent integration of surface and object and each must be enlarged, to a certain degree, in order to represent subtle geographies and structures. The face then becomes a palette, a hybrid identity, connoting self as cartography and self as portrait.

As a teacher, Tom feels this project would be worthwhile because middle school students are just beginning to explore their identity. As a photographer, Tom is sharing new techniques for expression, and as a relationship builder, Tom is helping his students to get to know themselves better through self-reflection. Multiple intersections exist between how Tom is using his professional identities to teach and to engage his students. By playing with identity, perception, layers, and transfiguration, Tom’s photographer identity and teacher identity blur at the edges, as one informs, acknowledges, and fuels the existence of the other. Tom’s interest in details, the microscopic galaxies of life, are no doubt surfacing in his teaching not only as he pays attention to his students but as he meta-reflects on his own teaching practice and notices what others are not.

**Renderings**

In terms of a/r/tographic renderings of Tom, the Surrealist devices of displacement and isolation appear to be prominent in Tom’s experience of his professional identity. Surrealists used displacement and isolation to create analogous worlds (Ollinger-Zinque & Leen, 1998) and to challenge conventions. Similarly, Tom is using his photographer’s eye to scrutinize what he knows and what he does not yet know.
about teaching, to perceive the multiple perspectives that shape his teaching practice, and to look for the angles that best capture how he wants to be perceived as a teacher.

Displacement refers to the mind substituting a new set of aims for the original ones (Ollinger-Zinque & Leen, 1998), and Tom is battling to find the balance between what he thinks a teacher should be and what a teacher should do with what kind of teacher he is and the kind of practices he should demonstrate. At this juncture, Tom is defining his professional identity, feeling somewhat displaced after working at a camera shop for ten years and then shifting careers to become a teacher two years ago. In his current profession as a teacher, he described feeling like the solo traveler, an explorer of new terrain, although he says he is expected to maintain a façade of confidence and control. As the researcher, it is difficult to perceive how Tom navigates the tension between his professional identities, moving from the photographer, an identity that is entirely comfortable, to the teacher, an identity that is still ill fitting, but the notion of displacement captures one aspect of Tom’s professional identity.

Secondly, in terms of isolation, Tom’s professional identities seem to be isolated from each other in the workplace. When he is teaching, he largely portrays being a teacher and explicit elements of his photographer identity are absent. Tom’s professional identities are literally and physically separated from one another. He does not even have photography studio space or photo equipment in his art room. As a result, his professional identities seem to be compartmentalized, and likely, his professional identities have not yet had time to fully intertwine or to intertwine very deeply. Furthermore, Tom is the only art teacher in his school, which is another layer of isolation, and a reason why he participates in the Meaning Makers meetings with other art teachers.
in order to find connection and resonance with peers. In sum, displacement and isolation are the renderings that most closely depict Tom’s professional identity at the present moment and affect why the intersections of his identities are difficult to perceive for this research.

**Conclusion**

Tom is in the second year of his teaching career, altogether forging a new professional identity, and it is unsurprising that, at this point, the intersections of his professional identities are subtle and discreet. According to Kegan (1982), in stage two of the evolution of self, the individual perceives forces as external and concrete, and since being a teacher is new for Tom, he is reconciling how to manage factors like student conduct and behavior so that he can focus more on teaching. Because Tom is challenged with student issues, it may be mitigating his ability to find the intersectional spaces of his professional identities. The Surrealist devices of displacement and isolation help render Tom’s professional identities, and these ideas are apparent in Tom’s description of his professional identities as well as in the additional data collected on Tom. It is likely a matter of time before Tom finds the space where his photographer and teacher identities become symbiotic instead of parasitic, since his love for art and photography are largely feeding his passion for teaching. Presently, it seems that when Tom is able to teach from the intersections of his professional identities, it is a fleeting gift not yet a sustained part of his practice. While Tom is a gifted photographer, he is learning his teacher identity, and my interpretation of the findings show the boundaries between the two stand firm yet there are potential points of convergence in his professional identity.
2. Allison Hagan

   **Portrait of Allison**

   Snow crunches underfoot as I walk towards the address Allison gave me. Looking around at the large boxy buildings with metal and brick facades and chain link fences protecting stacks of lumber and other goods, I would not have thought this is where I would meet Allison, having never been in this part of the city before. In the middle of the block, I gaze at an unusual yellow and green structure with an arched roof that juts out of its rectangular bottom like a rainbow. With the clocks turned back an hour from daylight savings, the evening is already pitch black. Only a few lamps cast light onto the street since it is an industrial section of the city. I park on the street about 20 feet away since five cars are already parked directly in front.

   I navigate towards the main entrance on the right-hand side, past stacks of terracotta pots pushed neatly to the side. Three doorbells reside by the doorframe, yet none of them seem to be for the studio space. I reach into my pocket and send a text message to Allison to tell her I am here. While I wait for her to unlock the door, a lone car drives by but otherwise the night is still.

   Allison unlocks the door and peers out. She is bundled in a thick grey scarf and a long black parka, and she ushers me in quickly so I can get warm. The day has been one of the coldest on record, and the evening is no different. We are in a tight hallway lined with bikes, a geranium plant that has long overgrown its pot, and two buckets catching water dripping from somewhere in the arched ceiling. The concrete floor is old and scuffed, the lighting is uneven, and it takes a moment to get adjusted and find my bearings amidst the congestion. It is one of those places where you shuffled your feet to
be careful not to bump into something by accident. Pathways are cleared just enough for mobility.

There are other doorways and some stairs, but we follow the hallway until it abuts two doors, and we take the one on the left. Then, we enter another space, this one more spacious but even more cluttered. Piles upon piles of assorted papers, paint, tools, supplies, Tupperware, scraps, cardboard, and other unknown objects line the floors, tables, shelves, and other surfaces. The air has a special damp, dustiness that only clay studios contain, a sort of fine mist of micro powder that decorates most surfaces.

About half of the fluorescent light bulbs are lit, leaving pockets of darkness at the sides and corners of the room that create a curious yet eerie atmosphere. My eyes have trouble focusing on what they are seeing. Instead, I notice green things, brown things, and white things that blur together into random piles of shapes and mounds. Shelves and tables are almost inconspicuous among the detritus. Occasional stools are interspersed, waiting for their owners to return. However, the most notable feature is the white plaster molds piled up everywhere like building blocks leftover from a construction site. Apparently, the molds were salvaged by the artists, and are used as a collective resource.
Beyond the main room, there are additional side rooms that make this building a web of artists’ studios. Throughout the piles, there are clearly defined territories of nooks and stations where artists make their work. Once I begin to adjust to the space, I notice that within the chaos there is an organic organization and structure, the result of creative comingling. This building is where Allison rents a studio space, a place where she has been making art for eight years, which is the longest she has stayed in any one place or held a job. Although we are in the main room, Allison’s studio is the size of a small supply closet, about 5 feet by 7 feet, located in the back.

Allison shows me to a corner, sort of a social area that contains a wood-burning fireplace, a welcome surprise. There are three mismatched armchairs—a black leather chair, a brown cloth chair, and Allison takes a seat in an emerald green chair made of
velvet with a matching footstool nearby. She has thoughtfully placed a bag of small oranges and a box of Trader Joe’s cookies on the coffee table beside an assortment of odd things including a pair of scissors, a bag of cough drops, postcards, coins, an old electronic toy from a key ring, some empty cups, and a small calendar with the title “Miniature Masterpieces” showing an image of horses and a farmland on the cover.

To briefly provide a background of Allison, she is 42 years old, Caucasian, and formally began teaching as an art teacher in public schools three years ago. She just started a new teaching position as of this school year as the elementary art teacher for grades PreK-5. Allison received her BFA in photography, and attended a teacher preparation program where she became certified to teach K-6 elementary along with her K-12 arts endorsement.

We take our jackets off and Allison places hers over her lap like a blanket but maintains her scarf tightly wrapped around her neck. She’s dressed comfortably in jeans and a black and grey striped long sleeve shirt. Her long hair is down, and her face is framed by glasses and straight cut bangs. Allison crosses her legs and settles back in her chair, peeling the skin off of an orange, and I enjoy a cookie before we start our conversation. Relaxing with Allison, next to fire on a cold night, creates a homelike atmosphere that swathes our conversation in privacy. We are the only people here except for a fellow artist who occasionally walks by, and so we begin the interview.

**Defining Allison’s Professional Identity**

With the rest of the room cloaked in darkness, our corner becomes a stage under a spotlight, and I ask Allison to tell me how she became a teacher and how she defines her professional identity. I am struck by Allison’s first comment. She immediately states she
is struggling, and as her story unfolds further, inner conflict and tension are themes she repeatedly mentions in regards to her current work. Allison is at a point where she is trying to reconcile her past professional identities with her present work. She describes it this way:

Well for me, I’m really struggling with my identity. Coming from, being able to spend most of my time in the studio and being considered an artist. You know, if I go out into the art world, people often know who I am and they know what my work is…I was used to, even though it’s hard to show your work, I felt like I got a lot of kudos for that all the time. It didn’t feel like, very often, people were like, or ever that I recall, were like, “Yeah, you shouldn’t be doing this,” or “Why would you waste your time doing this?” that kind of thing. It was almost always really positive. I guess I need it more than I thought I did. And then, when I would go in as a teaching artist, it was always, “Oh my god, we’re so glad that you’re here. This is amazing.” Now it’s like, “You’re a 4.5. There ya go. Let’s hope you’re not on probation next year.”

In this statement, Allison depicts a few things about how she perceives her professional identity. First, she identifies that her professional identity encompasses being an artist, a teaching artist, and a teacher. Second, she speaks about the need for acknowledgement and positive reinforcement in her work to validate her ability, and at the same time she implies that she has a high level of comfort and confidence in being an artist. Third, she references the teacher evaluation system in her current position at a public school district. Teachers are assessed on a 7-point scale on various instructional indicators, and a score of 4.5 means she is approaching performance, not yet crossing the
threshold into effective performance on a certain indicator. This tool aids in determining whether or not teachers can remain in their job.

Allison held many jobs between college and her current employment. She was a bartender, a waitress, a teaching artist, and a full-time practicing artist for 25 years. Three years ago, she made the decision to get her teaching license because a major life event made her realize it was time to embark on a career path that, in her words, provided more stability in terms of pay and benefits. Allison had prior teaching experience, but also her father encouraged her to enter the profession since he had been a teacher. Teaching runs in her family; her father, grandmother, aunt, and uncle were all teachers, which is why her family members joke, “Oh it’s a ridiculous profession, don’t do it.” Yet, she knows that they condone her choice because they respect teaching as a stable career.

Allison’s struggle of being an art teacher who yearns to be an artist is another theme in our conversation. She admits:

I’m trying to define who I am because, honestly, I’d rather be an artist. I’d rather not work under somebody else’s thumb. I’d rather get out there and promote myself and hustle for it. But, I really became afraid that it was not a way that I could live anymore.

For Allison, being an artist is not just a professional identity; it is something to which she has dedicated her life. On her bad days as a teacher, she says she feels, “like I have given up on what I really should be doing...I feel like I’ve given up on what’s actually really important to pay my rent on time.” Being an artist is the core of Allison’s identity, so much so that she cannot make a distinction between her “art and some other
kind of life.” When she was an artist, it was her “social life, and my thinking life, and my professional life,” which is another reason she finds teaching difficult because she does not have the energy to socialize like she used to or go out in the evenings after work.

To further understand how Allison perceives teacher professional identity versus artist professional identity, I ask Allison to discuss her perceptions. She mentions a memory from a state art education conference she attended:

I do have to say I had some stereotypes of art teachers before I started. It was that they weren’t really thinkers much, especially elementary. You know I went to the [state art education association] conference last year, and there was one woman who was right by me in the elevator, and she was so excited about the popsicle stick workshop, and it was just like “Oh my God.”

This sentiment alludes to Allison’s deep regard for intellectualism both in art and in life. She uses the phrases “pre-programmed lessons, not deep thinking” to describe her views on elementary art education, something that Allison strives to counteract in her work as an elementary art teacher.

When Allison speaks about her professional identity as an art teacher, an intensity casts itself across her face, her voice becomes soft, almost inaudible, and her words become deliberate as she pauses to articulate feelings. Whereas when Allison speaks about her work as an artist, the words fly out of her mouth, the stories are effortless, and she even chuckles when recollecting certain things. Allison admits there are good days and bad days in her teaching practice, but during our interviews, she laments her teacher identity and expresses the struggles with which she is faced. At one point, Allison says
she wishes she could be a full-time practicing artist again and that it is difficult not be in that world in the same way anymore.

This aspect of Allison’s professional identity demonstrates the uncomfortable space she is in as she transitions from one primary professional identity to another. Moreover, Allison appreciates intellectual work and is a deep thinker, however, she perceives the teaching profession to be filled with too much of what she calls, “gobbly-gook”, meaning it is jargon and theory heavy but is detached from the true essence and practices of good teaching. This tension is where Allison struggles to reconcile the kind of teacher she is and the kind of teacher that public education tells her to be.

At various points of the interview, Allison interjects other professional identities that she ascribes to which include being a maker, a writer, and an arts activist. Being an arts activist is a term she calls herself because she likes “to promote people that are doing, and the idea of people being independent and making.” At one point she wrote arts reviews for a local publication, so that is why she considers herself a writer. As a full-time artist, Allison was highly active in the art community, and she curated shows and even started an artist lecture series, which is detailed further in the next section. From this description of her professional identity, it is clear that Allison’s professional identity is an artist who has a few secondary professional identities, but more importantly, she is currently in a major transition as she tries to figure out her professional identity as a teacher.

**Intersections of Allison’s Professional Identities**

After I analyze Allison’s professional identities through her interviews, her teaching artifacts, and my observations of her teaching, the intersections of her
professional identities become more apparent. There are three intersections that appear vividly in the data. The first involves Allison’s intellectual pursuits and interest in community. The second features a body of work Allison did as an artist but translated into a student project, and the third comes from a handout she created for her classroom teaching. I will outline all three of these intersections and summarize what they mean.

First, and perhaps Allison’s most notable intersection, is that she was the founder, creator, and host of *Self-Made*, a weekly artist lecture series, from 2006 to 2008. At the Self-Made events, a member of the local creative community was invited to share his or her thoughts and inspire others by “Building an arts community, one artist at a time…” as the *Self-Made* tagline stated. After 2008, another gallery became the host location, but Allison still interviewed and scheduled the guests along with doing the promotion. At that point, the name was changed to *Action Figures*.

When this lecture series was developed, Allison was a full-time artist. She was inspired to begin the series after meeting various artists through her work, and hearing the stories of how they developed into successful artists. Allison decided to begin a series because she would meet:

> These fantastic people and I’d be like, “Oh, come talk,” and I’d get to pick their brain for 2 hours sometimes, and they’d show slides, and we just talked about who they were and how they got where they got, and that was great and really informative ‘cause you could hear about how you really do things in the world.

The series started slow, with only a few people at the first talk, but attendance grew over time. As a result of this work, Allison won a prestigious award from a local magazine, a cash award that recognizes local artists and organizations for not only their cultural
ingenuity and vision but also for helping fertilize the community with rich experiences and opportunities in the arts.

On its own, the term self-made references how people are the creators of their own identity, but indirectly, it acknowledges that people are composites of their decisions, experiences, and situations. *Self-Made* allowed Allison to reach out to the community, build relationships, and showcase fascinating ideas to a wide audience. In many ways, she acted as a conduit for spreading creative thinking and practice throughout the city. The intersection illustrated in this example, that space in between identities, is formed by Allison’s artist identity and social activist identity. Due to these two professional identities, Allison was able to both create as well as to better society. She invented an entirely new experience that was creative and socially transformative, and it is difficult to name the professional identity that occurs in this intersection.

The second noteworthy intersection in the findings appears when Allison was an artist-in-residence for eight weeks and worked with a group of middle and high school students as a teaching artist. While recalling this experience, Allison was exuberant and exclaimed that she felt, “so appreciated and also like what we were doing was making so much difference in these kids’ lives.” During this time, she led students through a project where they created animal sculptures in papier-mâché, loosely based on the body of work she was making in her studio at that time titled *Imaginary Friends* (see figure 7):

I told the kids about what I do, and it’s really just sort of how I process the world, and it really helps me make sense of the world, and a possibility that it would also help someone else, even if they weren’t going to make art or make art like that, but the idea that there are all these different ways that we can understand what’s
going on and that we can feel connected through time and space. A Greek myth might be completely relevant to you.

*Imaginary Friends* was a series Allison worked on for ten years, and all of the creatures she made were based on people from her life, but she merged them with stories from myths, legends, folktales, and pop culture. Through this work, she combined her human relationships with universal ideas and historic symbolism, such as turning her ex-boyfriend into a coyote.

![Imaginary Friends artwork](image)

Figure 7. Examples of Allison’s *Imaginary Friend* artwork.

What Allison particularly liked about this artist-in-residence project was that the outside community came together to support the effort, and everyone was able to share in the thinking and making of it, especially at the opening. This experience represents an expression of intersectionality because Allison was her authentic self. She could fully share who she was, and there were no constraints telling her what kind of artist or teacher
to be or how to perform being an artist or a teacher. She pointed out that she felt like a catalyst for the students, and “I could just be really authentic in sharing what’s important to me and that it was received and expanded upon.” Interstitial space is a place of borderlands, where boundaries are crossed and blurred, and in this example, Allison was teaching and creating from a place that portrayed multiple points of intersection where everything blurred together in perfect harmony.

Finally, even though Allison is struggling to more thoroughly blend her artist and teacher identities, there was evidence in her teaching documents that her artist identity is finding its way into her teaching. For instance, Allison showed me a handout she developed as a pre- and post-assessment tool for student learning objectives (see figure 8). On the front side, she calls the two-sided handout an Idea Catcher, and this is where students make a plan about what they want to create at the start of a project, with half a page dedicated to visualizing their idea. On the backside, there is a reflection sheet, and at the completion of a project, students answer two questions explaining what their work means and how they showed their idea in the finished artwork.
Figure 8. Teaching artifact created by Allison representing a student reflection worksheet, front side and back side.

There are two clear intersections of professional identity embedded within this handout. First, the handout is hand drawn, portraying Allison’s sense of typography and visual design. Second, Allison borrows the actions of planning and critique from the creative process, but she adapts it to be developmentally appropriate while also aligning it with district mandates to documenting student learning. Within this one teaching artifact, Allison reveals an example of what occurs when her teacher, artist, and maker identities collide. Obviously, this is not an ordinary teaching handout, but one that shows many unique attributes of Allison’s professional identity and shows how she thinks about and performs her work.

**Renderings**

As an a/r/tographer inquiring into the spaces between Allison’s professional identity, the Surrealist devices used to render her are condensation and metamorphosis. The term condensation refers to a fusion of ideas created from a subset, and
metamorphosis is the idea of one thing becoming another. These devices exemplify how Allison is transitioning from one career into another as well as how she connects aspects of her work history and experiences together to form her professional self.

In terms of condensation, the fact that Allison created the title *arts activist* to describe one of her professional identities suggests that she derived a part of her artist identity along with a part of her social justice identity in order to manifest another identity between the two. Condensation appears as a tight compilation of two or more identities into a hybrid identity that is another identity in its own right. Allison performs her arts activist professional identity mostly in her community work, although she is conscious of social issues in her personal art making and in the projects she assigns to her students. Likewise, Allison applies condensation as one of her artistic techniques. In her Imaginary Friends series, she literally condensed her friends into imaginary characters by combining aspects of their physical traits with animal, mythical, and symbolic attributes thus condensation is a quality within her professional identity and within her artistic process.

Metamorphosis is also visible in Allison’s professional identity. Since Allison is starting a new career, she is struggling to allow her teacher identity be her primary professional identity. Transitioning from one professional identity to another is a challenging and intense experience since Allison has to let go of her more familiar artist identity to allow another professional identity to emerge. Like the caterpillar that turns into a butterfly, metamorphosizing involves expanding borders and boundaries of identity to make space for other identities. Not only does metamorphosis exist in Allison’s literal act of changing careers, but it also includes the intellectual component of shifting internal
belief systems about identity. Allison is metamorphosizing her previous perceptions of art teachers to become the kind of art teacher she desires to be. Allison is transforming her actual professional identity, her self-perceptions of her professional identity, and through her work in the community, she is also transforming how society perceives artists and art educators. The devices of condensation and metamorphosis work well to render Allison’s professional identity.

**Conclusion**

Even though Allison is an art teacher, she does not yet perceive being an art teacher as her full professional identity. She vacillates between yearning for her artist identity and building a stable career as a full-time teacher. Presently, Allison’s professional identity is in transition because she is in her third year as a classroom teacher, and she is trying to understand the systems and expectations of elementary school teaching so that she can adapt to and feel more comfortable in that role. Allison discusses that much of the teaching profession seems like nonsense to her since teachers are inundated with requirements, policies, and mandates that prescribe how to teach instead of allowing the teacher to determine the best pedagogy and curriculum for their students.

Reviewing the data on Allison, it is clear that she has a rich history in the arts and varied work experiences that have contributed to her independent thinking and commitment to social justice. These qualities seem to underlie her art making and teaching philosophies. It is also apparent that Allison’s prior teaching experience as a teaching artist is entirely different than her current teaching, which means even though she is a new teacher, she is not a novice teacher. While Allison has multiple professional
identities (artist, teacher, arts activist, writer, etc.), she is at different stages of Kegan’s (1982) evolution of self with each professional identity, making her age irrelevant to the stage. Upon reflecting on her teacher identity, Allison acknowledges that being a teacher is causing her to feel insecure and that she needs to allow for more time before it makes sense, yet she is fully established in her artist identity. Consequently, Allison is searching for the balance between her professional identities, that space where the intersections bring autonomy and inspiration rather than tension. For now, Allison is metamorphosing into her latest professional identity of being an art teacher.

3. Ingrid Kent

**Portrait of Ingrid**

Short metal stools are stacked atop tables whose once black surfaces are now freckled with dried paint and the fingerprints of young artists. It is long past cleanup time, and no students are left in the building, however, their presence remains in the art room in the form of unevenly stacked papers, randomly placed cardboard projects, and supplies shoved into bins. In a faraway classroom, teachers are attending an after school staff meeting, so I wait in this space until Ingrid arrives.

The room is a rectangular white box with a linoleum floor that looks like caramel and vanilla swirl ice cream. Six windows about 5 feet tall face the doorway, and posted on them are a series of colorful handmade posters announcing “Smiley Creative School artists are…S.M.A.R.T.” which is defined beneath each letter as: S=Safe/Seguras, M=Motivated/Motivados, A=Artistic/Artisticos, R=Respectful/Respetuosos, and T=Trustworthy/Tienen Confienza. Each letter of the acronym is pasted on a different sheet of colored paper surrounded by post-it notes. The post-it notes depict student
definitions of these concepts, an activity that was done during the first-week-of-school to build community and common values.

One sidewall has dry erase boards, Ingrid’s teacher notes, and signage for students. The other sidewall has a projection screen with a chalkboard behind it, and there are additional display areas on either side. The left side is covered in magazine cutouts of animals, while the right side is Ingrid’s teacher area where she hangs an assortment of student drawings that were given to her as gifts. The student drawings are fairly novice, showcasing the developmental ability of most middle school students and how they interpret flowers, a bird, a snowman, and some abstract designs.

My eyes continue to scan the room and eventually pause on the cardboard structures lining the windowsill. When I was here last time for a classroom observation, students were avidly working on a form and function project, a papier-mâché assignment where the design of the cardboard building must reflect the building’s purpose. I watched as two girls collaborated to build a three-story wedding cake with hidden compartments. Each tier actually lifted off to reveal tiny tables and chairs inside for future customers. While the students worked, Ingrid wove amongst them to give tips and answer questions saying:

- Tell me about these parts?
- I like the background. Isn’t that a great color?
- How do you feel about that? [and she would point to a particular spot]
- Your choice. You’re the artist.

And when she arrived at the wedding cake building, she said, “One of my favorite artistic decisions you’ve made is that it’s all white on the outside and so colorful on the inside”
providing supportive feedback and encouragement. Now, a week later, the wedding cake bakery is nearly finished, and the exterior is painted white with decorative bands of teal and pink to give the appearance of icing. The form absolutely reflects its function.

In the distance, I hear voices echoing down the hallway, which is lined with lockers the color of pink cotton candy. Ingrid enters the room with her principal in tow. They pause at the entryway and stare at the immediate wall to their right, currently covered with seating charts for students and a large sign of the daily schedule. The principal reaches out to touch the wall, saying, “Right here we can put some stainless steel” and Ingrid nods in agreement and smiles, “We should have never bought that thing,” he continues, directing his eyes towards a portable sink over his left shoulder.

Last time we met, Ingrid lamented to me about her current teaching obstacle, a portable sink in her art room. As any art teacher knows, it is essential to have running water to teach painting, and this portable sink is the only source of water she has for her classes of up to thirty-five students. When Ingrid started at Smiley Creative School this school year, she insisted that her art room needed a sink, which led to the purchase of an expensive portable sink. However, it causes more problems than it solves because it requires her to fill its reservoir with water multiple times per day, which means special trips to the janitor’s closet and leaving her classroom for stretches of time, an unacceptable option. Instead, she teaches painting classes with minimal to no water, causing students to paint with dirty water and soak paintbrushes in trays of water overnight until Ingrid can wash them. This also means that during cleanup, it is difficult to wipe the tables clean and everything stays a bit messy. This problem has been taking a toll on Ingrid, someone who has taught “art on a cart” in her past, as well as art class in a
cafeteria. Even though, Ingrid knows how to be resourceful and work within limitations, this is stretching her comfort level. Thankfully, it seems her principal recognizes the direness of her situation and wants to remedy it with a permanent sink.

After he leaves, Ingrid turns to me, and we settle onto two art stools at a nearby table. Her medium-length hair is pulled back into a ponytail, the reddish color is growing out and her darker tones show through, she has multiple small silver hoops piercing both ears, a delicate silver nose ring, and wears thick eyeliner on her top eyelids. She has on a black scoop neck three-quarter length sleeve shirt with a black skirt, black tights, and black knee-high boots. She also wears a short necklace with a silver band that curves up like a smile, and a thick bracelet made of black strips that alternate with silver beads. On her hands, she has two thin rings, one on her ring finger and the other on her middle finger.

As Ingrid gets comfortable on her stool, a large grin shines on her face, reflecting her positive disposition. Her voice booms when she speaks, and when she laughs, it is raucous and full. Ingrid is 33 years old and even though she is unsure of her racial identity, she says she receives white privilege. She has been teaching for eight years, and began as a paraprofessional in Oklahoma. After that, she moved to her current city and became alternatively licensed in special education, which she taught for two years. Upon completion of her SpED certification, Ingrid became a visual arts teacher since she already had her BFA.

Ingrid started teaching at Smiley Creative School this school year because staff cuts and layoffs at her previous schools drove her to find a new position, and her husband happens to work there too. Smiley is the first school she has taught at where the
curricular emphasis is on creativity, and there is a team of artistic teachers to work with, two aspects for which she is extremely grateful. Ingrid recognizes she landed a coveted position in the teaching field, and it was competitive to be hired for this job. Furthermore, Smiley has a student population that Ingrid cares deeply about, which is one of the reasons she was hired for this position. After finishing the interview process, her friend told her that the hiring committee said, “Ingrid is more street and we need that, our kids need that.” Ingrid is attracted to working with students who are underserved and who come from diverse backgrounds, and she demonstrates respect and compassion toward her students. Smiley Creative School is a K-12 public creative arts school. Ingrid is charged with teaching four drawing and painting classes and two sculpture classes, one beginning and one intermediate level, for grades 6 through 8. Because of the school’s creative focus, teachers are designated to teach specific types of art and design instead of one art teacher being responsible for all art forms. Now that we are both settled in the art room, I move into the interview to unearth more about Ingrid’s professional identity.

Defining Ingrid’s Professional Identity

Before discussing how Ingrid’s defines her professional identity, it is necessary to outline how she arrived at being an art teacher since her career has followed a jagged path. Preceding her current role as an art teacher at Smiley, Ingrid dropped out of high school, citing that she lacked guidance on college and career options and that both of her parents had also dropped out. As a result, she started at cosmetology school before applying to art school and receiving a full scholarship to attend. At that point, Ingrid completed her BFA in Art History, but afterwards moved to a favela in Brazil where she
was a teacher and had her first experiences in teaching. Due to this experience, she realized she enjoyed teaching, but she felt terrible at it. When she returned to the states, Ingrid became alternatively certified and then realized that her BFA enabled her to teach art, which she did at three other schools. However, it was not until Ingrid completed her MA in Arts Education a few years ago that she says she learned the formal theories, structures, and core conceptions of teaching, the part of her work she felt she lacked.

For most of our conversation, Ingrid is strong and solid in her responses. However, when I ask Ingrid to define her professional identity, she stumbles. It is a point in the interview where she seems less capable of articulating her thoughts. According to Ingrid, this is because, “I feel kind of disconnected from that term. I still struggle with thinking of myself as a professional at times. I don’t know why.” For Ingrid, professional identity sounds official, and she does not perceive her work as being official or formal. She associates the actions of turning grades in on time, creating structured lesson plans, and going on job interviews as official acts of professional identity, but the things in her profession that she truly cares about, the things that are in the heart of her teaching and happen on a daily basis, are, in her opinion, not formal professional qualities. They are just part of who she is and what she does. A professional identity seems to be something she uses when people who do not know her, especially in such cases as meetings or professional events, surround her. Otherwise, when Ingrid teaches, she is a teacher, and that implies she does have a teacher identity, yet she does not perceive that her teacher identity is necessarily her professional identity.

To expand this sentiment further, Ingrid admits, “I think I have a hard time delineating my professional identity and just my identity, and I think in general that’s
difficult for me. I have a hard time as a mother. I have a hard time being a role model as a teacher.” Ingrid believes her professional identity has been part of her since she was very young. She says she is working to develop a more pronounced sense of her professional self in order to decrease the imbalance she feels from multiple aspects of her life blurring together. In Ingrid’s opinion, her identities seem to be overlapping too much, and she has difficulty teasing them apart.

Even though Ingrid expresses that she feels removed from the concept of having a professional identity, she is curious about her professional identity and wants to explore what it means for her. As we talk, I discover that this is the first time Ingrid has seriously thought about her professional identity. In one remark, she posits, “Really realizing that a professional identity is something I might even have, is kind of new, [short pause] yeah.”

When Ingrid introduces herself to other people and they ask her what she does, she tells them “I teach art”, which points to the fact that she uses the word teach as a verb rather than calling herself a teacher. This is an epiphany that she herself realizes during the interview. She states that she deliberately does not call herself a teacher because teaching art is the only thing she would ever teach. The blanket title of teacher is not descriptive enough, hence she directly calls out being a teacher of art, making it evident that art is a core part of Ingrid’s identity.

It is apparent that Ingrid’s perception of her professional identity is unclear, although, Ingrid is capable of communicating her perceptions of her teacher identity. Therefore, I try to interpret her professional identity by teasing out stories within her teaching practice, a technique used by Clandinin and Connelly (1996). I also ask Ingrid
to tell me about the things she does in her work besides teaching, and she provides a spiraling list: “a facilitator of learning artistic habits, question asker, critiquer, counselor, mother in some instances but not truly that…, peacekeeper, maid, sink fixer, that probably covers it.” Yet, when I ask about the work she does in her studio, she says, “I am artist, period. I’m not even mother at that point. I’m really ritualistic, and that’s been a really difficult balance for me ‘cause I really need like several hour blocks to work.” From this list, it is easier to determine two things—first, that Ingrid does indeed blend multiple identities together to the point where it is hard for her to differentiate them, and second, that it is likely that Ingrid is working from the intersections of her identities since she performs many identities simultaneously and perceives herself as many things.

Regardless of how Ingrid defines or does not define her professional identity, Ingrid embraces the looseness of her identity, meaning that she sees herself as the sum of many parts at the same time. She recalls that at first, this was challenging for her. In the beginning of Ingrid’s teaching career, she found it difficult to navigate student needs alongside her professional expectations, but now she accepts her teaching style in this way:

It’s a big crazy mess, and that’s okay. It’s okay for them to know that there are many facets of me and that they might have to remind me that we only have five-minutes left, and they get to know me, and I get to know them, and that part I’m a lot more comfortable with.

Being able to be authentic in her teaching and expose her multifacetedness to her students are important characteristics for Ingrid. No matter how she defines her professional
identity, the looseness and messiness of her teacher identity is central to her as well as to how she conducts her work and interacts with her students and colleagues.

**Intersections of Ingrid’s Professional Identities**

There are a few examples of how intersections appear in Ingrid’s teacher identity, which in this case, Ingrid’s teacher identity supplements for her professional identity since I was not able to concretely assess what is or is not part of Ingrid’s professional identity. For this reason, I will discuss intersections within Ingrid’s teacher identity. Interestingly, while some of Ingrid’s intersections are concrete or tangible, some appear as subtle, even conceptual spaces that others may interpret as personality traits or cognitive abilities. However, I argue that these are actually unique elements within Ingrid’s teaching and are derived specifically from how she combines her other identities.

Using Ingrid’s own words, she surmises how she perceives the intersections between her artist and teacher identities:

I think one of the ways that art definitely seeps in is in my planning and in my perception. I think visual artists have really distinct perception, and I think that I use it in my teaching to either capitalize on their interest or their fears or, um, what they hate, and not to necessarily go there, there’s no reason to do what you hate, and I think maybe just in my habits. Keep things tactile-y. Not very good at doing all the online stuff that you’re supposed to. Mine [lesson planner] is a messy journal that I would have to explain to you what my lesson planning looks like and some of those things, which are fine, I just have to navigate and do the additional planning as well on somebody else’s terms. That’s probably how it does the most. And it definitely just, of course, in content. I feel I have a long
history of talking about art and making art and knowing what is frustrating, that when students are really frustrated, I can be like, “You know what, every painting I do I wanna throw it out the window. At some point it’s normal, so take a break and then get back to it. That’s what you do, and when you’re done you’ll be proud and that’ll be that.”

This excerpt illustrates how Ingrid plans her school lessons similarly to how she plans her art. She has a messy lesson journal, not unlike a sketchbook, where she maps out and imagines future lessons (See figure 9). When it comes to content, she relies on her training in art history to make connections, and her artist background also enables her to anticipate where students will get frustrated. The physical intersection in this example is the lesson planning, where the stages of drafting a lesson are akin to sketching out an artwork. However, the conceptual intersection in this example is Ingrid’s perception. Ingrid is able to perceive things about her students’ ability, the assignment, and the artistic process due to her identities as both an artist and as a teacher.
Another subtle intersection within Ingrid’s teacher identity is her looseness, an idea that was mentioned previously. Being loose is an intentional structure within her teaching, not just a personality trait. Ingrid explains her teaching style:

I’m very loose, and I think lots of art teachers are, but I tend to run things very loosey goosey. It’s really up to the kids that things get done. Not that I don’t check in with them and stuff like that, but I try to give a lot of freedom, I think some teachers do, I don’t know that I’m alone in that, but I’m very intentional with freedom. In choice of what they’re doing or how they approach it, so I tend to be very boundaries oriented instead of project oriented. Art, I guess it’s still a project, but not do what I do just mostly don’t, don’t cross these boundaries. So
for example mythical creatures that we’re doing, I had a kid be like, “What about a taco?” I was like, “Tell me how that’s an animal.” He’s like, “Cow.” “Okay, you’re working within the boundaries.” So, I really enjoy that. I have a hard time thinking about what’s even typical, what would be unusual [compared to other art teachers].

Being loose means providing students choices within set structures. Perception, another concept mentioned previously, also ties into looseness. In her classroom, Ingrid permits students to reinterpret assignments as it pertains to their interests and desires, which actually propels their engagement and motivation. The looseness creates space for unexpected learning; it is not an indication of carelessness or lack of control, which would be behavioral characteristics. In this instance, looseness is an interstitial space disguised as a pedagogical mechanism. The looseness appears between Ingrid’s teacher identity and her other identities, thereby making it an intersectional space because it is untethered from predefinition.

Metacognition also appears in the intersections of Ingrid’s teacher identity. It may sound odd to describe metacognition as something that arises between two or more identities, but during our interviews, Ingrid metacognated quite a bit about her work and her art and how they inform and affect why and how she teaches. Many of Ingrid’s statements in her interview involve telling what happened in a lesson, why it happened that way, how her actions were interpreted by her students, and what she would do differently to either resolve or change it next time. For instance, she says:
I think ultimately, I don’t even think I did that bad of a job hooking them, it didn’t have the staying power that you need for good observation drawing, so I think in the future what I would do is…

Additionally, it so happens that in Ingrid’s lesson-planning book (see figure 9), she created a unit around the theme of identity, and her notes are peppered with thoughtful questions. She starts the planning page with “Who am I?” There is some self-reflection, and then she moves into types of metaphors that may be useful to use with her students such as peeling an onion or rings of a tree. Towards the bottom, she notes, “What is important to my learning and growth as a person?” again, a metacognitive question. This identity lesson shows how Ingrid challenges herself in her thinking as both an artist and as a teacher, yet it also recognizes how she extends this to her students. Not only does she select thought provoking themes for student art projects, but she also employs self-reflection where her teacher identity and artist identity, at a minimum, come together to strategize and inform her classroom practice.

Ingrid teaches from a place of openness, where she reveals her multiple identities, as well as from a place of authenticity, where she speaks her mind and says things directly. She also teaches from a place of heightened perception where she notices things and reflects on them. Her artist identity readily influences her teacher identity. The connections and overlaps between her artist identity and her teacher identity are layered and storied. In Ingrid’s words:

There’s just 1,000s of these in here [her lesson journal] where I think and rethink layering. I mean as a painter, and I think that I think about a lot of my life in layers, and in that way I guess it’s less compartmentalized and more just, “Are
you meeting this me or are you getting to know this me?” Or with teaching, what comes first, how does it build on the thing before it?

For Ingrid, she says art class is about “Making the playing field level, and I think art is a really great way of doing that because ultimately, it’s a thinking class.” In listening to and talking with Ingrid, it is obvious that she does a lot of thinking and reflecting as a result of her overlapping identities. Her teaching is rich and purposeful because she incorporates multiple identities and uses metacognition to reflect deeply about the connections between everything. Ingrid’s interstitial spaces seem to inform and support her decision-making in her work as well as her ability to be open to new ideas from life or from her students. There are intersections in Ingrid’s teacher identity that are physically evident as in her lesson planning, but also many that are intangible as in her perception, ability to relate with students, and ability to be loose and set boundaries in art making and teaching.

**Renderings**

In keeping with a/r/tography, renderings clarify what lies within Ingrid’s identity. Again, since professional identity was not determined for Ingrid, the renderings emphasize her teacher identity. Using surrealism to frame the renderings, the devices of doubling and substitution fit well to frame Ingrid’s experience of her teacher identity. Doubling implies that something is multiplied more than once or split into identical parts whereas substitution is when one thing stands for something else. Both of these are apparent in Ingrid’s professional identity.

The notion of doubling in terms of Ingrid’s professional identity refers to how she repeats parts of her identity or divides it up. For instance, Ingrid mentions how she lacks
balance between her identities, suggesting that she reuses her identities in work and non-
work situations instead of moving from her professional identity to her social identity to
her personal identity. Ingrid also speaks about her identity as being layered and that her
identities are not compartmentalized from one another. To provide an example, even
though she is a mother to her child at home, she also feels like a mother to her students at
work. The layer of *mom* is something that reappears, or doubles. Also in her workload,
she literally does double work because she does not follow the traditional lesson plan
format, and has to reformat her lesson book to fit other standards.

In terms of substitution, Ingrid substitutes the term professional identity with
formal identity, and consequently her perception of her identity signifies all of her
identities. She has difficulty distinguishing the components of her identity, and she
admits that this is a new concept for her. Rather then perceiving various social identities,
personal identities, and professional identities, she strings this complex matrix of
informal and formal identities together. For these reasons, Ingrid is using the term
identity to replace the parts of herself she has yet to name or define concretely.

**Conclusion**

Ingrid is not fully aware of her professional identity, and as a result, it is difficult
to define her professional identity and analyze it. Certainly, Ingrid has a strong artist and
teacher identity, and although these may not be her professional identities according to
Ingrid’s viewpoint, she draws upon her artist and teacher identities in her work. The
intersections in Ingrid’s identity are also challenging to decipher since they appear in
more nuanced and conceptual forms. While the physical act of using her lesson plan
book is similar to how she plans in her artist sketchbook, her other possible intersections
are found within how Ingrid uses looseness in her teaching and metacognition to process what she does and why.

Because Ingrid is quite self-reflective, her perceptions of her surroundings are strong but she is still developing a sense of who she is as a teacher and how her identities converge to make her who she is as a professional. Even Ingrid says:

I’m fully aware that what I do might look very different from what you think of when you think teacher. I’m not just a teacher, and I’m not just an artist, and it is, it’s super complicated. It’s an interesting thing to look into. I don’t know…

Looking at Kegan’s (1982) stages of evolution of self, Ingrid seems to fall between stages 3 and 4 (see Appendix E) since she has an awareness of her self and her actions, at times conforming to forces but also perceiving how forces shape the situation. In sum, Ingrid may be a person who is so highly reflective of her identity that she may not be able to untangle how her various identities fit together, for her, it may just be too complicated.

4. Nicole Falls

Portrait of Nicole

Swimming upstream against a sea of maroon and black uniforms, I find myself barricaded from entering an immense, gothic looking high school. The building is a sandstone fortress with wings extending in multiple directions. I brace myself against a railing as students literally pour out of the building. I am the anomaly trying to get inside. I assertively move into the main corridor, the hub of the bustling, and I veer past a station where a student group is selling nachos with yellow cheese and various toppings. During my last visit, this space was empty and my footsteps echoed off the
polished floors, but now, the halls are filled with a din of excited voices, high school students freshly released for Thanksgiving break.

Once I arrive at the top of the main staircase, there are only a few students still lingering. As I walk towards my destination, large maroon and silver banners pronounce “Scholarship”, “Integrity”, and “Citizenship” with the school’s crest emblazoned boldly on each one. I turn an awkward corner towards the left where the hall divides into an X-shaped angle, and long red lockers usher me down the hallway.

I arrive at an old, wooden door that is propped open. The plaque beside the doorway shows a headshot of Nicole, her name, a concise biographical statement of where she attended college, and a quote at the bottom that reads, “Good art is art that allows you to enter from a variety of angles and to emerge with a variety of views,” sourced from Mary Schmich.

I enter and find Nicole sitting at her desk, directly across from where I stand. After a full day of teaching, her long, dark curly hair is disheveled, and a few silver curls poke out around her face. She is wearing a loose fitting black and white striped long-sleeved top. Her plum colored eyeglasses rest on her nose, and her earrings, made of small red flowers and turquoise beads, standout against her hair.

Nicole is 41 years old, Hispanic, and has been teaching for 14 years, but she has only been at Pence Academy since the start of this school year. Pence is part of a large urban high school that is divided into three different academies. Next school year, she will teach grades 9 through 12 as the ceramics and jewelry teacher, but this school year she is teaching grades 8 through 11 in painting, drawing and ceramics. Before this
position, she was an elementary art teacher at two different schools, and she received her BA in Art Education.

Nicole continues working on her laptop, and without looking up she tells me, “I just need to finish attendance.” I take a moment to peruse her room, glancing at various books, art making tools, posters, shelves, and student art. Because her room is on the third story of the building, she has great views of the downtown city skyline, only a mile or so away, and the tops of tree branches skim her windows.

Last time I was here, I observed Nicole teaching a group of 12 students who were mostly on-task but who also acted like typical high school students by taking their time getting situated and by socializing while working. For students who were misbehaving or disengaged, Nicole’s remedy was to calmly sit beside them in an unobtrusive way until the situation improved. She would provide guidance by inquiring, “What are your next steps? What are you thinking about?” If the student shrugged or did not have an answer, she would persist, “You’re not sure. How do you feel about the color blending?” in order to discover how that student could further his or her work.

Nicole appeared methodical and deliberate in her teaching style. When students yelled for her attention from across the room, she maintained her cadence, answering the student’s questions in a tranquil tone, and then returning to whomever she was already supporting. She moved around the room with agility and attended to students one at a time, somehow intuiting what they needed. The overall atmosphere of her classroom was relaxed and nurturing.

As I walk around Nicole’s room, no students are present. Stools are stacked on tables, and tools and objects are organized. On one wall are full-length cabinets for
supplies, and on the opposite side are four windows above a countertop that has storage space underneath. One section of cabinets has doors while the other section does not thus storage bins poke out. Varnished, golden planks comprise the hardwood floor, reminiscent of an old gym. In fact, the entire building shows signs of age and character, which accounts for the stuffiness inside the classroom.

There is a smartboard on the furthest wall, but on the other side is a whiteboard. Around it, Nicole has posted signs made of paint and brown paper that exclaim, “Expressive features,” and “Characteristics” to remind students of key ideas. Nearby, are visual examples and pictures that correspond to the key terms. Written on the whiteboard are objectives for the units she is currently teaching in the drawing and painting class. These are clustered in the middle of the board with big cloud bubbles drawn around each to separate them and emphasize their importance. One says, “What is utopia and how do I contribute to my dream?” Another bubble says, “I can explore techniques and materials as I explore and imagine new inventive ways to interact with my ideas!”

Placed about Nicole’s workspace are small sketchbooks, handouts, student artwork, and three stacked wire trays to organize paperwork. There are also small stacks of index cards with student writing. Each index card contains a student’s personal definition of *utopia*. One states, “Utopia means to me heaven,” another decries, “Utopia to me means to live in a perfect place.” These cards are an assessment strategy Nicole implements to see how well students understand lesson objectives.

It is interesting to think that Nicole almost did not become an art teacher, yet she was actually recruited to teach in her current position at Pence since her colleagues recognize both her talent in teaching art as well as her ability to relate to students. In
college, Nicole was adamant about not becoming an art teacher and had her heart set on becoming an artist. Despite her reluctance, Nicole’s professors encouraged her to pursue teaching, and then after a positive experience teaching middle school students over spring break, Nicole changed majors from ceramics to art education. At Pence, Nicole is starting the next chapter in her teaching career, finally teaching the two media she is most passionate about, ceramics and jewelry, and she even has a dedicated clay lab and jewelry studio. It seems she has found a position and a school that embrace and complement her artistic energies.

After browsing around the room, I glance over at Nicole and see that she has completed her work. It is time to resume our discussion on her professional identity. I grab a nearby metal stool, about two feet in height, and sit by Nicole while she remains at her desk.

**Defining Nicole’s Professional Identity**

In general, Nicole defines the term professional identity as her formal identity. Almost immediately after asking her to define the term, Nicole says her professional identity is herself as a teacher but now that she is teaching at the high school level, she also sees herself as a mentor. Nicole describes her teacher identity as, “Putting art into my kids’ hands,” and her mentor identity as, “Being a place for them to find resources for other parts of their life.” Thus, Nicole is giving her students artistic opportunities and providing support that extends beyond the classroom. As Nicole ponders the idea of professional identity further, she adds:

My professional identity is one that I don’t think ever really quite goes in the closet, and I don’t know that there’s a time where I’m completely informal. Even
a lot of my friends are teachers, and so I feel like sometimes we end up at that place of shoptalk again.

It seems that Nicole’s professional identity is a constant part of her experience both in and out of school settings. She acknowledges that a portion of her professional identity is represented in her social circles or when she is out in public.

Even though Nicole explains her professional identity as almost omnipresent, she has distinct boundaries around her artist identity. When I ask Nicole if her artist identity is one of her professional identities, Nicole states being an artist is a different part of her identity and she does not connect it to her professional identity. The reason for this is that clay, jewelry, and sculpture, her areas of artistic expertise and interest, happen outside of school and are personal for her. Nicole does not desire to be an artist as a profession because she admits she does not sell well and feels challenged to promote her work. Consequently, Nicole associates being a professional artist with a person’s ability to earn money from their artwork, and being an artist as a person who is a consistent maker of work with a studio space. Regardless of whether or not being an artist is one of Nicole’s self-perceived professional identities, it likely informs explicit and implicit aspects of her teaching along with how she prepares and finds inspiration for her lessons.

One requirement Nicole has for her professional work is that it must bring her a sense of pleasure. Nicole refers to the Oscar Wilde’s quote, “Life is too important to be taken seriously” to reflect her life philosophy. When the stress and anxiety overpower the joy, then she says it is time to re-evaluate and potentially look for another job. However, Nicole does not change jobs frequently, she finds teaching positions that, for the most part, satisfy her. In fact, she taught at her previous school for almost ten years, a
place with a strong sense of community, and she was not looking to change positions until she was offered this current opportunity.

Similar to my conversations with the other individual participants, while Nicole and I talk, I begin to sense other professional identities underling her teacher identity. For example, Nicole comments that she excels at building relationships. In fact, according to Nicole, her two former principals hired her because she is masterful at connecting with students, observing them, listening to what they need, pulling back when it is too much, and getting them to open up to her. This implies that Nicole has strong interpersonal skills and perhaps possesses professional abilities akin to an empath or a social worker.

When I ask Nicole what she would do as a career if she could not teach anymore, she identifies working in hospitality as the most appropriate field for her. She is indeed a person who connects and relates well with people, so it makes sense that she would want to continue working closely with others. Even so, it is difficult to assign a title to this kind of professional identity. What term is appropriate to capture the professional identity of someone who is adept at understanding people and building relationships? However, it appears to be a type of professional identity within Nicole beyond being a skill set. For the sake of this argument, I perceive interpersonal relater and connector are elements of a secondary professional identity within Nicole’s overarching teacher identity.

**Intersections of Nicole’s Professional Identities**

In surfacing the intersections among Nicole’s professional identities, there are three that appear between how she describes her professional identity and her work responsibilities alongside her actions as a teacher and the kinds of work her students are
making. The first intersection includes how Nicole has evolved in her professional identity and continues to find balance in her teaching. The second intersection involves the unique ways she knows her students and is able to observe and perceive their needs. The final intersection is a combination of knowing her craft, teaching her passions, and working from her sweet spot, the place where everything feels instinctual and seamless.

Nicole recognizes that teaching is hard and takes time to learn. Every time she starts a new teaching job, she tells herself that the first year will always be difficult and challenging because she must readjust to the culture, students, and school community. Likewise, she remembers being a novice teacher and thinking to herself:

“I don’t really know, I’ve had training in everything, I don’t really know, I’m just scared of classroom management. I can do it all,” and then, you get into it and you realize, just like you do in college, you have something that you’re really comfortable with, like, it came well, you knew it inside and out, and you really had to uber focus.

For Nicole, this statement attests to her passion for ceramics, and it also references how art educators are supposed to be trained in many art forms, even though they usually have knowledge and talent in just one or a few specific areas of art. In the beginning of an art teacher’s career, it can feel overwhelming to try and teach all art forms, to be 100 types of artists as mentioned by the group participants. Eventually, the art teacher learns how to navigate and weave together her teaching practice with her true artistic passions in order to leverage her capabilities. While the first year of teaching had a “huh?” quality, according to Nicole, over time, she discovered how to intuit and blend her skills into a fluid practice, which points to an intersection around balance.
Even an experienced teacher, such as Nicole, has difficulty finding and staying in the intersection between being a teacher who teaches the skills and techniques of art and being a teacher who guides her students’ in developing their own artistic practices. There is nuance to finding and staying in this space because it shifts depending on many variables such as the ability and attitude of the students, the time of day, the type of class, and so forth. Nicole notices that she constantly battles moving back and forth across this space of balance in her work:

I feel like sometimes I’m like “Oh yeah, I got that, and I’m gonna be the facilitator” and then sometimes I slip back, and I’m trying to figure that out. And you’ll hear it said by more experienced teachers than myself even that there has to be a balance of teaching skill, teaching technique, getting the vocabulary down and then having that space so there’s teeter totter.

It is noteworthy to remark that the intersections of one’s professional identities are not places where an individual can easily remain or (re)discover because of the slipping, balancing, and shifting that regularly occurs between them (Springgay et al., 2008). Nicole mentions finding her balancing point and losing it, being aware of it and almost unaware of it simultaneously. She notes that this is something even master teachers struggle with albeit they have more years of experiences to develop a clear awareness of whether or not they are in or out of balance in their work. Incidentally, when Nicole teaches from her intersection of balance, she notices that her students take more ownership of their work and the process is no longer driven by her, she is able to support instead of lead them towards the goals of the lesson.
Moving into the second intersection, in order to obtain this level of teaching where it is more student-directed, Nicole employs more of her interpersonal professional identity, the one that includes her ability to empathize, perceive, and build relationships. While teaching, Nicole spends a portion of her time just noticing and observing. She does this intentionally, and she explains why:

Well, when you just step back and notice that somebody, whether it’s an adult or a kid and they’re in a place, just to just stop, and be in their shoes for a moment, not judging, just be in their shoes, just watch them, just observe them, not react. It’s, uh, it’s something that I do. Sometimes I get too busy, and then I’m moving, and then I just have to stop, and just stop and listen to the sounds and watch and just bring this sense of calm. Yeah, that empathy of “hmm”. And, it really helps me too, that sense of calm, yeah, “Tim’s now on the third time with that project,” If I would have just kept going and talking and not observing, I might have missed that it’s the third attempt. I wonder if he needs help, I wonder if he doesn’t. I’ll just check in.

This excerpt expresses Nicole’s professional identity as a teacher, but it is also embedded with other identity traits they are unique to her. This quote actually captures an example of Nicole’s identities intersecting in her practice. While Nicole recounts observing and supporting students in the formal ways expected of teachers (Shulman, 1986/1987), she is also being highly perceptive and reflective of her classroom, the mood, the energy, and the atmosphere by performing a novel kind of survey of the students and the environment. Nicole comments on how her teaching is supported by carefully observing and noticing her students, taking deliberate time during class to
visually and mentally assess how students are doing. Above this, what she is doing is not an act of judgment, but rather a moment of active curiosity to interpret how to proceed with supporting her students. The intersection in this instance is a matter of how Nicole observes, relates to, and perceives her students. Due to her professional identities, Nicole is more astutely aware of things in her students and in her classroom that others may not readily perceive.

Moreover, for the third intersection, Nicole is now in a teaching position where she can truly connect her artistic interests with her teaching. Nicole’s current teaching position at Pence Academy is her first teaching position where she has a clay lab and is the ceramics instructor, which is one of the main reasons she took this new job. When Nicole describes her clay studio at Pence, joy fills her face and she enthusiastically describes how it feels to teach ceramics classes. Her confidence in teaching is apparent when she discusses teaching ceramics:

When I’m downstairs in the clay lab, it feels even more incredible. Like things just move smoothly, gracefully, more work needs to be done, but not unattainable…. That’s where it becomes instinctive, not just mentor, but like skill, like I can foresee even though I haven’t taught. Now I could still stretch things…. I wouldn’t have made the leap [to change jobs to teach high school]. That [ceramics] is my sweet spot. And it’s my sweet spot because that was my honed in focus at a very early stage of my development as a teacher. I think that plays out and you know, not that we can’t as art teachers learn more, but now, if they ask me to be the AP [Advanced Placement teacher] for drawing and painting, I’m going to be like you have the wrong person, I just don’t have that.
The notion of a sweet spot in teaching, where one’s content knowledge, pedagogy, and technical expertise (Shulman, 1986) crossover with one’s life passions and talents, would seem to be a quintessential intersection of one’s professional identities. In the clay studio, Nicole’s abilities as a teacher and experiences as a ceramic artist overlap the most. The intersection is two fold; it is a physical space where her teacher skills and artist skills merge, and it is also an instinctual space where teaching and creating flow seamlessly to the point where Nicole can anticipate and problem solve well before students encounter a problem. In support that a sweet spot is the truest convergence of inherent passions and talents within one’s professional identities, Nicole affirms at the end of the statement above that she would not be able to transfer her abilities or have the same kind of instinct if she were asked to teach another type of advanced level art class. The sweet spot cannot exist when passion or expertise are absent.

Aside from this third intersection representing a remarkable example of what can happen in the intersections of a teacher’s professional identities, it also questions how students react to moments when teachers teach from the intersections of their identities. When she is teaching in her ceramics studio, Nicole points out how thoughtful and focused her students become, “I think part of that is just that passion that I have while I’m down there really just flows out,” which speaks to how Nicole’s ceramics student act differently compared in her painting and drawing students. She notices that her ceramics students talk to each other and bounce ideas off each, engage with the work differently, and they ask each other about what worked and what did not. The way they interact, she believes, is largely tied to the fact that her passion is clay and the students sense it when she teaches from her purest interstitial space.
The three intersections described in Nicole’s professional identity are strong examples of the power that can manifest when professional identities overlap in positive and meaningful ways. Nicole notices how she has to find a space of balance in her teacher identity, that she is able to perceive things about her students and classroom that are probably not apparent to outsiders, and that she is her most capable teacher self when she is combining her teacher qualities with her artistic passions. Next, the renderings will discuss the themes within Nicole’s professional identity.

**Renderings**

From an a/r/tographer’s view of Nicole’s work experiences and artifacts, the surrealist devices of misnaming objects and condensation most closely render her professional identity. Misnaming refers to calling an object or idea by something other than what it actually is, and condensation is the notion of omitting or creating an incomplete version. Both of these terms capture the strongest ideas within Nicole’s professional identity.

The surrealist artist Magritte was known for painting an object, but calling the object in the artwork by another name, purposely toying with society’s use of labels. This intentional misnaming was his way of challenging the symbolism of language and asking the viewer or reader to consider what words really represent (Ollinger-Zinque, Leen, 1998). Similarly, Nicole has at least one element of her professional identity where there is no obvious name for which to call it. She stated repeatedly that she is talented in relationship building and connecting with students, yet aside from calling her a connector or some derivation thereof, there is not a clear term to use for this type of professional identity. Language is inadequate to articulate this aspect of Nicole’s professional identity.
identity, and for that reason, misnaming of objects is one of her renderings. Nicole is this thing, this relator of people, but we are forced to call it something, which in reality is only an attempt to name it. At least one of Nicole’s professional identities is not really the thing we call it.

In addition, Nicole lists being a teacher and being a mentor as her professional identities, subsuming her other professional identities into these two broad terms. The result is a condensation of her other professional identities into these titles. Given Nicole’s description of her work, I am inclined to think there are more professional identities that Nicole possesses, but I was not able to uncover them within the timeframe of this study. For instance, even though she associates her artist identity as a personal identity, when she discusses teaching students in the clay lab, there is a definite element of her artist self that appears, implying that being an artist has some connection to her professional identity. As a result, it seems likely that Nicole possesses more than two professional identities, but she has condensed her professional identities into the most prominent ones, presupposing a subset of professional identities lives underneath.

**Conclusion**

Nicole is at the beginning of a new chapter in her professional career and perhaps in her professional identity as well. Having started her journey desiring to be an artist and instead teaching elementary art for the past 14 years demonstrates that Nicole is filled with passion and expertise in both art and education. Nicole’s professional identity includes being a teacher, a mentor, and a strong relationship builder with students, according to her self-perception, yet her artist identity looms in the background as a covert professional identity, according to the research findings. Misnaming of objects
and condensation are two renderings that suit Nicole’s professional identity because it was difficult to uncover her various identities and provide them with proper names. Although Nicole’s professional identities may have been hidden to some extent, her stories reveal intersections of overlapping spaces in her work. Nicole explained feeling graceful and in her flow when her identities were co-existing and balanced, a rich example of what can happen when professional identities not only merge but complement one another to leverage and enhance the other. Even Nicole’s students behaved more engaged and inquisitive in reaction to when she channeled her intersecting identities.

5. Nancy Dover

Portrait of Nancy

The weather on this fall afternoon is warmer than usual. As I drive up, the street is quiet and there is plenty of parking alongside the curb. Trees line the sidewalks, and the leaves show various shades of reds, yellows, oranges, and greens. If I were to drive a few more blocks in any direction, I would arrive at shopping plazas or office buildings, but tucked away from the hustle and bustle of city life is this beautiful neighborhood, an affluent nook with even sidewalks, landscaped yards, and no traffic.

I climb four steps to the entrance of a two-story brick house with white trim. The overall exterior color is a soft reddish hue. The main door is already open, and instead, a glass door acts as the barrier. I tap lightly on the glass, stare into the entryway, and not seeing any sign of Nancy, I clasp the handle, find it unlocked, and open the door a crack in order to shout, “Hello?” I hear Nancy say “Come in” from the right side of the room. As I step inside, my nostrils fill with the fragrance of a hearty stew, the type of smell that lingers and makes you feel glad to be home. The room temperature is cooler than
outside, and as Nancy peaks out from the kitchen doorway, she is wearing a navy cardigan over a blue and white patterned button-down shirt.

Nancy walks over to greet me with a huge grin on her face, and we embrace each other. I have known Nancy for a few years as a colleague, but never before have I interviewed her or studied her for a project. We have familiarity with one another but not the social intimacy of close friends.

Nancy explains to me that she is preparing to host a visiting artist and his family that night for a potluck. The artist gave a talk at the university where she works, and she invited him and other guests to enjoy a homemade meal. Nancy’s home is a hub of entertaining, in fact, I have been invited to her home before when our mutual colleagues from Mexico and Chicago stayed with her. Even though her children are in college, there seems to be a stream of visitors and friends coming and going for various gatherings at her house.

We are standing in the dining room, and as Nancy finishes clearing the table, I survey the space. The dining room is painted in two tones of blue, the bottom third is a pale, grayish blue, the upper portion is slightly lighter conjuring colors of the sea. The walls are not painted in a semi-gloss finish, rather they are matte, a technique more akin to a fresco. The room is sparsely furnished with a large rectangular wooden table and five wood chairs tucked around. The chairs are painted in a palette of periwinkle, rusty orange, and mustard yellow. There are two windows, a few framed artworks on the walls no bigger than 8 inches square, paper triangles strung together hanging above the kitchen doorway, and two green side tables in the corners of the room.
The dining room opens into the entryway and living room. The living room itself boasts a cobalt blue wall color, and given its colorful decor, the room feels energized and harmonious within its unique traits. For instance, there is a variety of seating to accommodate visitors. There are three stuffed armchairs—one is lavender, one is a floral print in predominantly greens and yellows, and the other is a floral print but in deep reds and greens—and the sofa across from the chairs is a mossy-colored plaid. There are bookshelves on both sides of the room completely filled with books, a fireplace with an historic mantle, and lamps and end tables in between the seating. Two large windows and a set of double doors that are no longer functional, merely decorative, provide lots of natural lighting. It is a room where I could envision getting cozy and staying for some time, just reading and relaxing. Placed in the corners and on the mantle are artistic and natural details such as gourds, figurines of roosters, birds’ nests, and other little objects. It takes time to absorb and notice all the personal treasures living in the room.

Nancy asks me if I would like anything, I decline, and we sit across from each other at the dining table. Nancy sets her hands on the table, clasped together, and she holds them like this for most of the interview except when she gestures during her stories. Although her hair is short, the front pieces are long enough to tuck the salt and pepper locks behind her ears. She is wearing her glasses, something she does not do consistently, and she is dressed comfortably but professionally.

Nancy is 53 years old, Caucasian, and has been teaching for 20 years, 10 of which were as an elementary art teacher at a charter school with a focus on project-based learning. She studied art in college and went on to receive her MFA in painting. Later, she received her National Board certification in early and middle childhood art.
Currently, she is a professor of art and art education at a university located in the
downtown area of a city, which is also just a few miles from her home. The student body
mirrors the demographics of the surrounding region, making it one of the most diverse
student populations of any of the neighboring institutions of higher education, and it
offers some of the lowest in-state tuition.

Being the only two people in the house, the space is perfectly quiet. The
afternoon light streams in through the dining room windows, and I start the audio
recorder for the interview. Nancy’s warm smile puts me at ease; a trait I noticed is
inherent to her demeanor even when she teaches college students. Another of Nancy’s
traits is that she chuckles and grins to herself when she reflects upon certain ideas. With
that observation, we begin our discussion.

**Defining Nancy’s Professional Identity**

To begin the interview, I ask Nancy about her professional identity and how she
defines that concept in her own terms:

I think I think of it maybe in a negative way, like defining yourself by the work
that you do, which I do. But, I think of that as negative because it seems like it’s
more about your title or your status, but I’m comfortable if somebody asks me
what my professional identity is, I feel fine answering that question.

After making that statement, Nancy identifies her professional identities as three things:
1) a teacher of teachers, 2) a teacher of artists, 3) and an artist. Each of these means
something specific to her, which I ask her to describe.

As a teacher of teachers, Nancy explains that she helps new teachers understand
constructivist pedagogy, create their own interpretations by critiquing other models of
teaching and learning, and understand multiple forms of assessment. For her professional identity as a teacher of artists, Nancy teaches her college students about formal artistic skills and techniques as well as how to think and communicate their ideas in metaphorical and poetic ways. Lastly, her identity as an artist is the professional identity she has had the longest and which has evolved the most. Nancy started out as a painter, but over time, lost interest in that art form. Even though she still paints, she has shifted her artistic self, “I think of myself now more as a social practice artist and a performance artist.” Nancy creates art through performance pieces where she writes scripts and becomes a character, acting her ideas out in public spaces, and she also makes art that critically analyzes and reflects upon social ideas or explicitly integrates social commentary.

To examine how she arrived at these identities, Nancy retraces back to her childhood. As a child, Nancy always identified as an artist and enrolled in art programs for both her undergraduate and graduate studies. She thought teaching was the last thing she would do because it seemed both boring and beneath what she considered the archetype of a true artist, “If I did that [teaching], I wouldn’t be a real artist and those were for people who weren’t real artists, weren’t committed to their practice as an artist,” which at that time an artist was what she aspired to become. However, after marrying her husband, who is also an educator, and having children, she realized something about teaching:

I started to see the power of that position, of being an educator, and I just decided that I would investigate that, and I did through reading some things that my husband was reading and watching the teachers at the school and being in my children’s classrooms, and then I sort of fell in love with this idea of being around
lots of people who were doing thinking and that seemed more interesting than being in a studio by myself doing thinking. So it’s more of a, I guess, I went to teaching because I wanted to be in a community, and I think it’s still, to me, is they’re all about thinking, kind of just thinking with people instead of thinking by myself.

Thinking, reflecting, making, performing, and community are threads that reoccur throughout Nancy’s discussion of her professional identity and also appear as part of the process of how she moves between her work. As a result of the realization that she preferred thinking in a community as opposed to spending hours alone in her studio, Nancy was compelled to enter teaching and change her career path.

Other aspects of Nancy’s professional identity are revealed as the interview progresses, aspects that do not consciously appear to her. For example, Nancy tells me a story about showing her slides to a gallery owner when she was trying to get represented back in her days as a professional artist. As the gallery owner looked through Nancy’s images, he spouted, “Why don’t you just write?” It turned out that every image of Nancy’s artwork was saturated in narrative. Nancy says her portfolio probably had some semblance to a graphic novel. This makes me wonder if Nancy has a hidden identity as a writer, and Nancy responds by saying:

I’m not a good writer of fiction, but I love writing. I love writing anything. I love writing emails. And that plays a big role in teaching. I love writing artist statements…If I can’t really teach anymore, I want to still write children’s books, and I really want to write books about artists that people don’t write books about
very much. And I don’t want to write curriculum. I just would love to write picture books about women artists and contemporary artists.

In a follow-up sentiment, she adds, “I sometimes think, ‘Well, why wasn’t I just a lit major? Why didn’t I just become a librarian?’ But I didn’t. But the narrative part to me is the most interesting part about art.” Ostensibly, Nancy is a storyteller who tells narratives using words and images, and while she has not yet published a book, given her strong desire, interest, and commitment to writing and illustrating, it can be inferred that it is only a matter of time until this happens. As a side note, Nancy is a published scholar and has written a few articles and contributed a chapter to a book.

It seems that being a writer and being a storyteller are two of Nancy’s other professional identities, even though she did not overtly state them. While these identities are not at the core of Nancy’s list of professional identities, they likely interact with and influence her three primary professional identities. Perhaps, Nancy considers being a writer as an interest instead of being a subsidiary part of her professional identity.

Finally, to gain clarity on how Nancy perceives her professional identity, I ask her what her dream career might be if income did not matter. Nancy becomes so excited by this question, that she cuts me off mid-sentence to blurt out:

I know exactly what that would be: a year in an elementary school, a year in a college, a year in an elementary school, a year in a coll...So, I would be teaching little kids, I’d be teaching art education, I’d be teaching little kids. That’s it, ‘cause I feel like, I’d be so much better. Everything I teach would just be steeped in research, and it would be so great to just cross back and forth, and to pollinate,
and just apply what I learn to both sets of kids. I just think it would be so great, incredibly dynamic, and I don’t think there’s a structure for that.

Ultimately, what Nancy illustrates in her dream career is a complete crossing of her professional identities, both within the physical structure of the work itself and within the blending of content and knowledge. This idea also demonstrates the developmental growth that Nancy has obtained in her professional identity because she acknowledges the value of moving from an elementary classroom teacher to a college professor, a comment she could only make with hindsight from her work experiences.

Imagine this analogy for a moment, it is almost as if Nancy describes her ideal professional identity as a double helix, two interlocking strands of professional identity weaving together, consequently building bonds that fit together in a specific sequence to transfer information to the other. As of yet, it is not possible for a professor to alternate teaching cycles between college and k-12, but Nancy asserts the promise and potential for the field that could be unlocked if this idea could be manifested. Crossing literal boundaries between institutions of education and crossing conceptual boundaries between types of professions is how Nancy conveys her ultimate scenario of her professional identity.

In sum, Nancy identifies her professional identities as a teacher of teachers, a teacher of artists, and as an artist. Within the identity of artist, Nancy associates it with being a painter, a performer, an illustrator, and as a social activist. Moreover, beneath the other overt identities are the elements of Nancy as a storyteller and as a writer. It seems that Nancy has a plethora of specific professional identities, and she alludes that her identities bond together and build upon each other. Someday, Nancy dreams of being
able to transition her professional identities back and forth to generate a double helix of professional identity.

**Intersections of Nancy’s Professional Identities**

The intersections of Nancy’s professional identities are varied, akin to the other individual participants. Before I illustrate examples from Nancy’s experience of her professional identity, I will begin with a commentary Nancy provided that frames both how she thinks about the act of teaching and how it shapes her teaching practice. Following, Nancy explains how she perceives other teachers, and how she herself moves from one professional identity to another:

I have a friend who is an educator and she told me, or she told my husband this and he told me, that there are (she worked with lots of teachers) and she saw some teachers as scientists and some teachers as poets, teacher-scientist, teacher-poet, and she thought both were great, and it doesn’t mean you’re teaching science or poetry. It means you could be a math teacher and you could be either a poetic math teacher or a scientific math teacher, and that resonated with me. I mean, I definitely see teaching as an art form, and it’s this call and response thing you do with your students. It’s very intuitive and yet there are these structures just like how you would have to build your canvas and you would have to know what materials to use, so there’s all these structures. So, it’s really hard not to think of it as an art form. It’s very fluid and intuitive, and I like jumping back and forth between the structure and the intuition. I love that pathway between those two things, and I just love running back and forth, and I like spending time in both places, but I would not want to be in one place only.
After the last point, Nancy chuckles as if it would be ridiculous to expect her to do one
thing and be content in doing only that. Indeed, it would be an absurd requirement of her.

I open this section with this particular statement because I find it important for
two reasons. The first is that Nancy is the only participant to explicitly describe different
types of teachers. In her estimation, there is a dichotomy of teacher types—the poet
versus the scientist. Considering that a math teacher could either be scientific or poetic in
his or her practice reflects that a teacher’s identities can influence his or her pedagogy. In
her early years as a teacher, Nancy feared she was too heavy on the teacher-poet side, so
she sought teacher mentors to help advise her on how to become more of a teacher-
scientist to instill more structure and analysis into her teaching.

The second point from this excerpt is that Nancy clearly migrates across the
borders of her identities. Nancy expresses how her teacher identity is edified as a result
of traveling amongst her multiple professional identities, which in turn brings her great
pleasure. She literally describes intuitively jumping back and forth to access spaces and
concepts inside of herself in order to deliver knowledge and facilitate learning. Most
notably, she mentions the joy she feels while doing this, she even describes a pathway
between her identities. It is apparent that Nancy fuels her teaching practice by combining
and borrowing from her multiple identities.

Cross-pollination of identities creates interstitial space, a space of otherness
within professional identity. Referencing Nancy’s earlier statement about her dream
career being the alternation of being a classroom teacher and a professor, she is literally
describing having two careers simultaneously as well as two different kinds of pedagogy,
two different kinds of content areas, two different age groups, and two different educational settings. The bridge connecting the two sides is Nancy herself who can no longer be only a professor or a classroom teacher but instead is a hybrid form of teacher identity that encapsulates both kinds of practice. The aforementioned excerpt about teacher-poet and teacher-scientist sets the tone to further describe intersections in Nancy’s identity because there is dichotomy and separateness as well as similitude. The space in between identities is difficult to articulate, but it happens as a result of crossing boundaries.

To provide a concrete example of one of Nancy’s intersections, she tells me about being a translator of ideas for her students. If identities can be crossed, then it would follow that ideas can be translated between them as well. Nancy started noticing her aptitude for translation when she taught an art survey class at a community college, which was mostly comprised of nursing students who needed a humanities credit:

I really loved it. I felt like I could take all of my hoity-toity art history stuff that I got in college, I felt like I could just make it make sense for nurses, and I loved that and then I felt like I could do that for elementary school.

Continuing this practice, later, Nancy translated ideas for her elementary school students:

I feel accomplished for breaking down, kind of, didactic mumbo jumbo into clear language, and so when I taught in elementary school, there are a lot of resources that I couldn’t find, especially on contemporary artists, they just weren’t written for kids, so I would create little packets, or I would just present, and I would love that…
Not only is Nancy gifted in borrowing ideas, content, and concepts from her prior knowledge and experiences, but also she knows how to revise them in meaningful ways for unintended audiences. By repurposing information, she is able to craft content into digestible and appropriate formats, making translation one of the outcomes produced in the interstitial spaces of her teacher identity.

The next example of intersectionality appears as practices that involve imagination. In certain intersecting spaces within Nancy’s professional identities, magic, metaphor, and storytelling arise. To provide background context, in addition to teaching college during the school year, Nancy plans and directs a children’s summer camp with her husband. Due to this summer work and 10 years teaching elementary art education, Nancy has developed a unique perspective of the world causing her to notice details from a child’s point of view:

I’ve noticed kids are doing this [in a neighborhood]. They make fairy houses like at the foot of trees and little doors and ladders, and so I thought “I think I’m going to just use that Borges book of Imaginary Beings and just talk about all the different things”… and they can make a place for a creature in the city and more of a narrative, I think. So every summer, I start a new thing.

Not only does Nancy perceive things that other adults may not, perhaps more importantly, she imagines the possibilities that exist within those ordinary things and within her everyday surroundings. Then, as a teacher, she applies imagination as a tool of creative development in order to incite her students’ own interpretations and lay open their fantasies. Additionally, Nancy is an avid reader, which enables her to easily make connections from the imaginary world to works of literature, fiction, and poetry. Again,
this exemplifies an intersection born out of a trifecta of identities; Nancy’s writer, teacher, and artist identities appear woven together as she draws upon narrative, fantasy, and social issues to develop a project around imaginary creatures and their habitats in the city.

Furthermore, one story in particular demonstrates the power and impact of Nancy’s multiple overlapping professional identities. The following passage reveals how Nancy embeds performance art, storytelling, history, artifacts, and content expertise effortlessly and fluidly into her work. Essentially, Nancy retells how she introduced and taught the arts standards to her college students, but she does it in such a way that it becomes an ongoing spectacle, or rather a grand experience that interweaves layers of meaning. Nancy’s story is this:

When I gave the students the [state] art standards, you know, I usually pass it out, and this time I really wanted it to be more of a performance. So, I had sort of this plan, but I took chicken bones, and I washed and scrubbed them, they were like, chicken wing bones, really tiny, and I dried them out all summer. So we [Nancy and her college students] went outside on the grass and stood in a circle, and then I read—um, it does relate kind of to the little rituals of kindergarten—we read this passage from Ezekiel about the dry bones. There’s this valley of dry bones, and God says to whoever the prophet, God says, “The spirit breathes into these bones,” so the spirit breathes into the bones and then the thigh bone connects to the—that’s where that song comes from—and, so the bones start to connect and then they get sinews on them and then they get muscles and flesh and they become alive because the spirit breathes into these dry bones, it’s the valley of dry
bones, so I read this passage, and I kind of like edit it a little bit so it wasn’t too religious, and then I read them this passage and then I gave everybody a bone and I walked around and passed bone to bone to bone and then I gave them the art standards and then I said, “These are dry bones and you need to breathe life into them.” So, whenever I say, “Get out your standards,” I say, “Get out your standards, you know, the thing that goes with the bone,” just so they have that little memory.

The obvious purpose of this activity was to deliver the state art standards to her students, but the implied purposed was to create a lasting experience that made the standards come alive with meaning instead of being another list of mandates. Nancy’s ability to thoughtfully create a magical context around the standards transformed them into literal and metaphorical bones from which to build curricula. After doing this performance with her students, there was a range of responses, but some students were so moved that they later asked for the passage and even embedded and sewed their bones into their sketchbooks, certainly a sign that this activity left a lasting impression.

The final intersection that emerges in Nancy’s professional identity encompasses being a magician. As explained above, Nancy translated the concept of art standards through the physical representation of bones, but this is also a trick to get her students to shift their perceptions and understandings. When talking about being an art teacher, Nancy says, “I had this luxurious job where I got to be the magician” meaning it was permissible for her to bend her teaching style and delivery without the risk of being noncompliant. Nancy was not held to the same expectations as teachers of core subject
areas such as literacy, science, and math, which freed her to be whimsical in her teaching and explore alternate tactics.

In many ways, intersectionality may be the space where a teacher utilizes combinations of tricks from his or her other professional identities, ultimately turning the teacher into more of a magician. For Nancy, she owned being a magician; it was not an implied construct. She saw being a magician as a way to:

Help children see things poetically and think in terms of metaphor and to think that the world’s enchanted. And, that grown-ups think these things too and they’re called artists. You know, it’s not just children who play and not just artists play, lots of grown ups play.

As a magician, Nancy embraces the tools, passions, and talents embedded within her other professional identities. Magic tricks are another form of her pedagogy, a type that disguises complex ideas as approachable and fun lessons. Since Nancy retains a sense of child-like zest, play is an important value in her work and in her art. Magic permeates her knowing, doing, and making across her identities.

To summarize, in the moments when Nancy taps into the spaces between her professional identities—imagination comes alive, translation is enacted, and magic occurs. Her being a teacher of teachers, a teacher of artists, and an artist fuels the intersections within Nancy’s professional identities. Because everything is a form of art for Nancy, she is constantly intersecting her identities and being inspired to crossover in order to redraw, remake, and redefine connections, which ostensibly affects her teaching practice.
Renderings

After examining both Nancy’s lived experience of her professional identities and her teaching artifacts, and also observing her teach, I was able to discern the a/r/tographic renderings of Nancy’s professional identities. Using Surrealism to guide the choice of renderings, the devices of alteration and doubling fit Nancy’s professional identity best. Alteration and doubling are traits that permeate Nancy’s teaching experience, stories, and evolution. Nancy referenced how she had evolved into different types of artists and also mentioned the recursive nature of her professional identity, her desire to return to the classroom and teach children but to also maintain a presence in higher education.

In Surrealism, alteration is the distortion of the original shape (Elder, 2013; Ollinger-Zinque & Leen, 1998). The reason alteration is a rendering for Nancy is that she began her career as a painter, then attempted to illustrate children’s books, and then progressed into a performance artist and social practice artist, thus altering her artist identity along her career path. The same is true for her teacher identity where she began as an adjunct faculty in an art department, then became an elementary art teacher, and presently, she teaches as a college professor in fine art and art education. The point is that Nancy has altered her artist identity and teacher identity over time, and by being many variations of the same or similar thing, Nancy portrays that alterations may exist within a singular title. Although she has been a teacher for many years, she has been many different types of a teacher, thus changing the meaning of teacher in each context, and likewise the meaning of artist.

Moreover, alteration is a concept that can also be applied to the spaces between her professional identities. To become a magician or a translator, Nancy had to alter the
original shape of her existing professional identities to form other spaces within her identity. In essence, the alterations are evolutions, distortions, re-combinations, and interstitial spaces of her professional identities.

Doubling is the multiplication or repetition of an idea more than once (Elder, 2013; Ollinger-Zinque & Leen, 1998). The rendering of doubling is captured in the chronology of Nancy’s career as she moved back and forth between artist and teacher. To trace her work history, Nancy started as an artist, then taught art as an adjunct faculty in college, then shifted to working in her studio as an artist, and then went into teaching elementary art. While this is a rough outline, the pattern that can be derived is that Nancy repeats her professional identities of teacher and artist over and over again. Furthermore, this even exists on a calendar year where in the summertime, Nancy is an artist and a writer, but during the school year, she teaches college. She doubles her professional identities year after year. Finally, in Nancy’s description of her dream career, she states how she would like to alternate back and forth between teaching elementary and teaching college. This answer itself is an affirmation of how doubling is a sincere rendering within Nancy’s professional identities.

**Conclusion**

As the most veteran teacher in the group of individual participants, Nancy has been practicing and reflecting upon structures and processes of teaching for 20 years, which means she has a significant amount of experience from which to synthesize her understandings of her professional identity. At this stage in her career, Nancy recognizes that she has multiple professional identities, and she consciously transitions between them to adopt, adapt, borrow, and cross traits that support certain areas of her practice. In
Kegan’s (1982) framework on evolution of self, Nancy would likely be in stage four as the self-authoring knower who can manipulate the forces around her to produce experiences.

Overall, it appears that Nancy’s interstitial spaces are inherent to and inseparable from her work. As Nancy explained in her interview, teaching for her is, “It’s very intuitive and yet there are these structures just like how you would have to build your canvas and you would have to know what materials to use.” Nancy knows how to put her identities together to create her teacher canvas and further develop student learning. It has become a fluid system of, in her words, following pathways where she can draw upon her multiple professional identities. Within her overt professional identities also lay her interstitial identities as a storyteller, imaginer, translator, and magician. By crossing her multiple professional identities, Nancy believes it brings dynamism to her work and infuses passion and authenticity into her practice.

Summary

This chapter explored and analyzed the perceptions provided by the 14 group participants and the 5 individual participants about their professional identity. Since the participants are art educators, it was unsurprising that many of the participants acknowledged teacher and artist as their primary professional identities, however, there was a plethora of additional sub-identities that surfaced, many of which were mentioned as being relevant or influential to their teaching. As an a/r/tographic study, the findings in this chapter were part of an inquiry into what lays between artist/teacher and other professional identities in an attempt to open areas of knowing and thinking that
traditionally surrounds conceptions of professional identity. More on this topic will be discussed in chapter five in regards to the larger themes within the research.

In terms of the three research questions guiding this study, generally the participants were able to define their conceptions of the term professional identity, the first research question, and most were able to define the types of professional identities they ascribed to and perceived in themselves, the second research question. Defining and describing the intersections of the participants’ perceived professional identities was much more difficult and this was largely revealed through stories of self (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995/1999) along with analysis of compiled teaching artifacts, observations of teaching, and metaphorical representations of professional identity. The third research question, which pertains to what happens in the intersections and what novel practices arise, was also difficult to determine and spanned a continuum of ideas that is best captured through the renderings. For instance, metamorphosis, doubling, isolation, and substitution were some of the key themes that appeared in the intersections, and participants themselves were often not aware of these traits nor had the vocabulary to clearly articulate these qualities.

For this reason, as an a/r/tographic study, renderings provided a way to interpret the findings and distill reoccurring or common elements within the participant data. The Surrealists, artists who intentionally manipulated dreams and reality into hybrid and altered representations of imagery and language, applied techniques to create their work. These techniques, which are termed devices, provided the foundation of the a/r/tographic renderings (see Appendix D), and they will be referenced further in the overall evaluation of this study.
In regards to the participants and their contribution to this study, the group participants were able to elicit and recognize general observations and feelings about their professional identity through discussions amidst colleagues. The majority of the group participants noted that professional identity contains layers, messiness, complexity, lack of balance, and elements of fantasy and reality. Group participants also agreed that it takes time to process and understand one’s professional identity, in fact, some of the more veteran teachers commented that it takes many years to notice the trends in one’s professional identity.

Likewise, for the individual participants, the interviews, classroom observations, and teaching artifacts produced deeper conceptualizations of professional identity along with complex examples of intersections within practice. The majority of individual participants, at a minimum, divided their professional identity into artist and teacher (see Table 3), but many added identities as they continued to articulate their thoughts during the interview. Similarly, some of the same renderings appeared across the individual participants such as condensation and doubling. It was difficult to decide on the most salient devices for each participant because every Surrealist device conveys at least some portion of the ideas expressed by the participants. Thus the renderings were based on the top one or two themes that emerged from each individual participant.
To review the individual participants, Tom, as one of the most novice art teachers, shared his struggles of finding his teacher identity as well as his inability to incorporate his artist identity into his work. Allison, also a new classroom teacher, shared Tom’s sentiments, but her artist identity was firmly established and was at odds with her teacher identity. Both of those participants had difficulty blending professional identities and practicing from inside the intersections of their identities. Ingrid had never considered the concept of professional identity before and had trouble separating the formal aspects of her work into various components of professional identity, although, naturally, she used intersections in her teaching practice. Nicole and Nancy were the most developed in their teacher identities and had a strong sense of when they were or were not teaching from a point of balance, intuition, and flow, that space that seemed to directly manifest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art Teacher Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>Primary or Explicit Professional Identities (as described by Participant)</th>
<th>Secondary or Implied Professional Identities (as gathered by the researcher)</th>
<th>A/r/tographic Rendering through Surrealist Devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom Abbott</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>- Teacher - Photographer</td>
<td>- Unknown</td>
<td>- Displacement - Isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison Hagan</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>- Artist - Teaching artist - Teacher</td>
<td>- Maker - Writer - Arts activist - Intellectual</td>
<td>- Condensation - Metamorphosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid Kent</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(Disconnected from this idea. Professional identity is omnipresent)</td>
<td>- Teacher - Artist - Facilitator of learning artistic habits - Question asker - Critiquer - Counselor - Peacekeeper - Maid - Sink fixer</td>
<td>- Doubling - Substitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Falls</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>- Teacher - Mentor - Relationship builder</td>
<td>- Artist</td>
<td>- Misnaming of objects - Condensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Dover</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>- Educator of educators - Educator of artists - Artist (performer, painter, social activist)</td>
<td>- Writer - Storyteller - Magician - Imaginer - Translator</td>
<td>- Alteration - Doubling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from intersections of professional identities. A developmental progression can be overlaid onto this analysis, and more detail will be described in chapter five.

The most notable challenge for both the group and individual participants was distinguishing the concept of professional identity from overall identity along with extracting and separating elements of professional identity into other identity categories. It was difficult for teachers to precisely address the identities they perform in their classroom aside from teaching. Oftentimes, when asked to supply a term other than teacher, participants shared mentor and facilitator, mere substitutes and synonyms for teacher. Some participants struggled to name professional identities that either complemented, opposed, or were in isolation from their teacher identity.

To tease apart this confusion, the metaphorical representations aided in expressing feelings and experiences of the participants that lacked verbal expression. Visual imagery and metaphors were tools to release and promote alternate dialogue around professional identity. Even still, participants included imagery or comments of being a mother, a friend, or other social and personal identities. These terms were disregarded in the findings to maintain consistency among the definition of professional identity used in the research. The English language does not contain enough words to accurately depict or describe what a teacher does in his or her work aside from technical skills and responsibilities. Yet, this research supports that nuances exist within art teacher identity, especially in the intersectional spaces when a teacher borrows, merges, adapts, or crosses one identity with another to extend or enhance ideas or practice.

In conclusion, a/r/tography worked well for this study as a methodology that promotes inquiry into spaces of identity alongside artistic and linguistic data and analysis.
Likewise, the renderings, driven by surrealistic devices, brought forth the thematics found within the participants’ experiences of the real, surreal, and subconscious aspects of their professional identities. The findings show that art teachers due indeed possess multiple professional identities and that these identities intersect in unique ways, manifesting a range of practices in the classroom. Chapter five will review the overall themes of this study as well as present the greater implications that may result from this research.
Chapter Five: Thematics, Evaluations, and Implications

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to inquire into the professional identities of art teachers and to explore what happens in the interstitial spaces where their professional identities collide, ultimately attempting to uncover what affects this has on an art teacher’s practice. This study set out to answer the research questions: (a) How do art teachers define professional identity? (b) to what professional identities do art teachers ascribe to or self-assign, aside from being a teacher? and (c) what novel, hybrid, or innovative practices occur in or as a result of the intersections of art teachers’ professional identities? For the most part, the findings from this study revealed answers to the research questions, but they also sparked more questions, a consequence of strong a/r/tographic research designed to “create openings that displace meanings and allow for slippages” (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 898), rupturing the known and the unknown.

The concept of multiple identities is not new in the literature, but multiple professional identities have not been fully explored especially in terms of teacher identity and its implications on the teaching profession. Moreover, intersectionality is a recent theory and methodology (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013) and appears to be on the cusp of becoming its own field. Since this study focused on the intersectionality of teacher professional identity, it stands as a departure from conventional studies of teacher
identity. In many ways, this research is cutting edge in regards to defining a new construct and analysis of art teacher identity and how they perceive themselves as art teachers. Furthermore, this implies that teachers of other disciplines may be studied in a similar fashion to open the definitions of teacher identity.

Art teachers hold a certain niche within the profession of teaching. Even though they are teachers as well as specialists, their teaching peers and artist peers often perceive them as outsiders. To underscore how other professionals place art teachers into an interstitial professional space, Nancy provided this paradox:

When you’re at a party of artists, and you say you’re an art teacher, people start to look over your shoulder to see if there’s somebody more interesting to talk to.

And, if you’re at a party of educators, and you say you’re an art teacher, they start looking over your shoulder to see if there’s someone more serious to talk to, so it’s really a weird space.

The irony in this passage is that art teachers are part of two professions, but not fully respected by either. Potentially, only art educators understand and accept other art educators. Although my choice to study art educators stemmed from my background as an art educator and my an affinity for that group, it did not occur to me before conducting this research how art teachers have unique training, mindsets, and habits from their artistic studies. As a result, an artistic background likely makes art teachers’ intersectional qualities more vivid than other types of teachers or other professionals, and makes them stronger candidates for this type of research.

From an a/r/tographic perspective, an art teacher is a professional who fundamentally works from interstitial space. To tease a part the interstitial spaces of art
teacher professional identity, it required opening the knowing, doing, and making (Springgay et al., 2008) of being an art teacher, and focusing on the porosity as opposed to the separateness of teaching practices. In turn, attending to what was situated between the edges of professional identity provided visibility into a spectrum of hybrid identities in art teachers.

Furthermore, this concluding chapter also considers what this research means to the teaching profession in general, beyond the scope of art teachers. Inherently, teachers are professionals who are expected to make knowledge understood (Shulman, 1987), and seemingly, they accomplish this by performing multiple professional identities. Philosophically, teacher is a broad term and in contemporary parlance, it substitutes a plethora of capacities and roles embedded in a teacher’s job. Teacher is a composite of professional identities that are either assigned or ascribed, but a/r/tography purposely explores these intertwined relationships through “sensual and textual ways of knowing” (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 905) in order to manifest relational inquiries.

Reiterating the literature review, scholars discuss intersectionality using different terms. Intersectionality has kinship with research on landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), borderlands (Irwin, 1994), rhizomes (Irwin et al., 2008), hybridity (Bhabha, 1996), and third space (Gutierrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejada, 1999). Even though these concepts assume different viewpoints, they have a common synergy, which is to expound upon what happens at the crossover or edges of objects and ideas. From this range of scholarship, it can be concluded that many scholars agree that it is necessary to re-consider and expose existing paradigms.
The findings support that there cannot be fixed definitions of what teacher identity is or how an art teacher should perform his or her identity in the classroom. Criteria of professional identities actually diminishes its fluidity, when in fact, future research “needs to focus on the ‘unnamed something’—the ‘without’” (Rogoff, 2000 as cited in Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 909). In terms of the participants in this study, within the landscapes, rhizomes, borderlands, and third spaces of their professional identity, there were subjective advantages, limitations, and renderings that enabled heretofore unnoticed, unseen, and unnamed possibilities within their identity to be encountered and shared.

Also revealed in the findings, teacher identity is an ongoing process of formation that involves aspects of “pedagogical expert, subject matter expert, and didactical expert” (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 1999, p. 750). As Shulman (1987) notes, there are preconceived views of who teachers are and what teaching means as determined by society and other professionals. Often, a teacher’s sole responsibility is seen to “transform understanding, performance skills, or desired attitudes or values into pedagogical representations and actions” (Shulman, 1987, p. 7). According to Shulman (1987), the generalized teaching behaviors that have been identified by research in order to assess teacher effectiveness trivialize and simplify the profession and ignore the extent of its demands, which is why a/r/tography serves to dig into the deeper spaces between named pedagogical practices and categorized structures.

In actuality, teaching is fairly difficult to define and lacks clarity around its complexities and knowledge base as a profession even though policymakers contend that empirical research can quantify these qualities. Shulman (1987) argues that often,
“teachers themselves have difficulty in articulating what they know and how the know it” (p. 6). This implies that there are many types of content, character, and behaviors underlying and contributing to how teachers self-identify as professionals and carry out their work.

As made clear by Nancy’s paradox, art teachers are overlooked and under-regarded by peers even though they bring knowledge and expertise to both the field of art and teaching. Findings in the study show that art teacher identity is comprised of a multitude of qualities and the term art teacher is a superficial title. Furthermore, art teachers struggled to express and name their professional identities, supporting how complex and interwoven professional identities can be.

The methodology for this research was a/r/tography, a cutting edge arts-based methodology. A/r/tography was used because it complemented the study of participants who are artistic by profession, and it allowed for inquiry and data collection that was both linguistic and visual. Because a/r/tography is a form of “enacted living inquiry” (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005 p. 899), it promoted creative structuring and multiple meanings. As an a/r/tographer, I was able to craft the research study into an artistic design and interpret the findings through a creative arrangement of text-based and pictorial interconnections more so than other methodologies allow. Likewise, as an artist/researcher/teacher, I found my research tendencies necessitated an imaginative format, which a/r/tography permitted. Many forms of representation were used to collect data, explore concepts, and conduct analysis.

The participants in this study were recruited from a group of art educators who voluntarily attend monthly meetings to discuss theory and practice revolving around art
education. The study was broken into two kinds of participants, group and individual. By starting with a group of 14 art teacher participants, and then conducting more thorough research with 5 individual participants, the data collection began broad with input from many art educators, and then went deep to focus on the perceptions of a few. In chapter four, the individual participants’ professional identities were revealed through their stories of self along with my observations of their teaching practices to portray their professional identities as authentically as possible. At the same time, chapter four inquired into the spaces where art teacher professional identities intersected and provided renderings of the participants based on Surrealist devices.

Concluding this overview, the remainder of chapter five will discuss the thematics and implications from the findings. Four major themes were derived from the findings, and these are aligned to Surrealist concepts. Before sharing the themes, I will begin by returning to the concept of intersectionality and how its definition was reshaped and redefined as a result of this research. This provides important context to support the rationale in the themes. The concepts of interstitial space, interstitial identity, and what happens in the interstices informed the choices of the final themes.

**The ABC’s of Professional Identity: Defining the Intersections**

Where are the intersections of an art teacher’s professional identities? How are they located, and why do they appear? After all, intersections between identities are invisible. There are no entrances or exits between professional identities because intersections are manifested from existing identities without beginnings or endings.

A term that Surrealists used to encapsulate intersections or the spaces in between is heterotopia, a concept that can be traced back to Foucault (1983). Given that utopia is
near perfection or an ideal, and dystopia refers to unpleasantness, heterotopia reflects otherness, a place in the middle that is comprised of differences. Heterotopias are spaces where intracategorical relationships (McCall, 2005) become united and filled with heterogeneous identities. Heterotopias are one of the major findings in the research, and it is explained in more detail in a later section. With that said, heterotopias are another way of naming, thinking about, and discussing interstitial spaces.

To understand the significance and quantity of interstitial space in an art teacher’s professional identity and how multiple identities are naturally embedded within a teacher’s day-to-day practice, consider the following rationale. If a person has two professional identities, say artist and teacher, then one interstitial identity is formed between the two such as art teacher. But if a person has three identities, then four interstitial identities are formed. The amount of interstitial identities increases exponentially as the number of professional identities increases. Importantly, no matter the number of professional roles or identity memberships a person ascribes to, a central professional identity will be maintained as a point of social stability and validation (Martire, Stephens, & Townsend, 2000; Settles, 2004).

To further support this rationale of professional identity intersections, a visual diagram has been prepared (see figure 10), which will be referred to as the ABC model of professional identity (Berk, 2015). In the first example, a person has three professional identities labeled identity A, identity B, and identity C. Using simple arithmetic, the number of overlapping identities includes: identities AB, AC, BC, and ABC. Hence, three identities have the potential to create four interstitial identities. In the second example, a person has four professional identities and 11 interstitial identities are
potentially formed (identities BC and AD are not labeled in the diagram). This demonstrates that the number of hybrid, or interstitial identities can be higher than the number of actual identities, which is why it is messy and difficult to describe professional identities for the purposes of research and many participants struggled to do so during their interview.

![Diagram showing overlapping circles of identity A, B, C, and so forth.](image)

Figure 10. The ABC Model of Professional Identity: Three identities intersecting compared to four identities intersecting. (Berk, 2015)

Studying the overlapping circles of identity A, B, C, and so forth, it becomes obvious that professional identity can be conceptualized as multiple spaces that interlock and crossover. Therefore, it is more probable that a person performs work from one or more of their interstitial identities than from a space of pure or singular professional identity. In turn, it is probable that society encounters hybrid professional identities more often than singular professional identities, yet we mistakenly refer to interstitial identities by a singular or more familiar identity title instead. In sum, this is the ABC model that provides a foundational concept from which to define the existence of intersectionality.
Following this argument, the term teacher may be used to identify the professional identity of teacher, but it may also reference more than being a teacher or an art teacher, implying how society uses nomenclature that is false, insufficient, and inaccurate when attempting to articulate a specific professional identity. For instance, when Ingrid recited a list of her possible professional identities such as maid, sink fixer, mentor, critiquer, counselor, and peacekeeper (see Table 3 in chapter four), she was likely using singular identity titles to label her hybrid identities. The fact that she listed so many professional identities suggests that her primary professional identities were generating exponential interstitial identities for which she had no name. Again, this argument is supported through the participant’s lived experiences of their professional identities, and their inability to name and often misname their professional identities. For the most part, participants settled for familiar titles to categorize identities that were shapeless and unbound.

**What Happens in the Interstitial Space?**

The third research question in this study investigated what happens in the interstitial space of professional identity. Specifically, the research attempted to uncover the types of practices that arise in interstitial space; however, it became evident in the findings that it was less about practices and more about feelings and attributes that the participants experienced. According to the research data, the overlaps within professional identity were spaces where an art teacher had heightened perception and fluidity of practice. He or she felt more balanced and could effortlessly integrate passions, beliefs, and talents into positive experiences in the classroom. As a result, working from interstitial space enabled the participants to perform in an enhanced
capacity, anticipate student frustration and challenges, engage students more deeply in the material, and relate to students’ individual needs more closely. The power of interstitial space was a consequence of layered interconnections and interdependencies; an infusion of parts supporting the whole. While hybrid practices may arise in interstitial space, it was difficult to study those in this research, which is why the feelings and qualities that participants described in their interstitial identities became the main finding.

Aggregating the keywords, phrases, and terms used by participants in relation to their professional identities showed commonalities and trends. Participants were asked to describe what they noticed or felt in their work when they crossed professional identities. A few individual participants were aware of interstitial spaces inside themselves and therefore were able to recall moments when they experienced overlap. The other participants were only able to discuss actual teaching experiences, and I had to unpack the hidden aspects where intersections were inferred. Through data analysis, the intersections were often conveyed as spaces of harmony and unity, spaces where a person felt incredibly successful as a professional. In the data, these accounts appeared as vivid memories, for example, where a participant explained teaching one of the best projects of her career or connecting with a student so profoundly that she felt she made a transformative difference in that student’s life. Stories that involved positive feelings, mindsets, and behaviors were indicators that multiple identities were at play. The terms participants used most often when describing the crossing of their professional identities included (see Figure 11): sweet spot, authentic, heightened perception, ability to anticipate or foresee, flow, and instinctual.
To further support the participants’ claims that intersections within professional identities caused harmonious experiences of professional identity, Csikszentmihalyi (1992) identified a similar phenomenon in his studies, and he termed this concept *flow experience*. Theoretically, flow accounts for an “optimal state of experience” (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 3). Csikszentmihalyi first noticed this concept when he observed male artists at work and saw how immensely concentrated they were on their activities. The act of painting was in itself the reward more so than completing the artwork, linking flow with intrinsic motivation (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992).

Since its inception, the flow concept has been applied to numerous fields and has found practical application to psychology, education, and the theory of happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Scholars argue that there is urgent need to apply flow to
schools and to work because people spend a substantial amount of their lives in school or at work where boredom and anxiety are perpetual challenges. If flow could be found and experienced in these places, then on the whole, students and workers would be happier and would find more enjoyment in their day-to-day activities.

Hence, it can be hypothesized that teachers who consciously and subconsciously blur their professional identities into positive hybridizations will experience more intrinsic motivation and higher levels of flow, causing them to be more satisfied in their professional practice at work. This hypothesis gains some support in the findings when Nicole spoke about teaching her students in the clay lab, a physical space that merged her enjoyment of ceramics and teaching. Nicole recounted that she felt amazing and was able to teach in a way that felt seamless. Flow may be one of the key concepts that occur in the interstitial spaces of professional identity along with other positive feelings.

The research was able to provide a better understanding and definition of the location of interstitial space and the approximation of what happens in it. From here, I am able to discuss the four key findings regarding the intersections of professional identity that were distilled from the research. In keeping with the a/r/tographic nature of this study and to reveal meaning through both language and imagery, four paintings by René Magritte are used to highlight and deepen each finding. The paintings themselves, the titles of the paintings, Surrealist devices, and my written analysis provide the final renderings of the research.

Each of the four findings of professional identity is discussed in depth in its own section. The first finding argues that words and images are arbitrary signifiers and do not adequately capture the meaning of what they signify. The second finding discusses
hybridity and heterotopia, which imply that when two or more professional identities come together they do not just combine but actually form an altogether new entity. The third finding concerns paradoxical relationships where two separate and opposing ideas can be one thing simultaneously, even if it is does not seem plausible. Finally, the fourth finding suggests that upon successful crossover of one’s professional identities, victory is achieved, and this is a place where intuition, balance, and unity flow together—the ultimate interconnectivity.

**Discussion of Themes**

1. **This Is Not A Pipe: Words Are Arbitrary Points of Meaning**

![Image of a pipe with the text "Ceci n’est pas une pipe."](#)

**Figure 12. Ceci n’est pas une pipe (This is Not a Pipe).** René Magritte. Oil on canvas. 1948.

What is the relationship between words, images, and things? How does reality correspond to dream-states, and why should society theorize about such matters? Foucault, a great philosopher, and Magritte, an esteemed Surrealist, were colleagues who respectively questioned the order of things both in a book and in an exhibition called *The Order of Things*. This is because, fundamentally, Surrealists were interested in
questioning and undoing “the conviction that reality is stable, fixed, a self-disclosing donné. The Surrealists’ fascination with the double image was that it posed this question: Which way of seeing this bimorphic (or polymorphic) representation corresponds to reality?” (Elder, 2013, p. 324). Surrealists explored how a subject could be composed of multiple realities thus unfastening one-dimensional views.

The purpose of Surrealism was to use poetic experiments to question the truths that society ascribes to and to disrupt public assumptions. Surrealism was spawned in large part as a response to the aftermath of World War I and civil unrest, and they used art and writing in the form of posters, manifestos, and protests to start a movement to shift public opinion and drive the need for political engagement (Gale, 1997). Although this research is not about political issues, it shares the sentiment of disrupting realities, in this case, the reality of teacher professional identity. This study attempted to question and give voice to experiences in teaching art that do not conform to conventional strands of teacher professional identity.

Connecting back to the painting in figure 8, when asked what it is, one would say it is a pipe, and that is inaccurate. A Surrealist would say it is a representation of a pipe, which is different from the thing itself. From the opinion of Foucault and Magritte, words and images do not represent reality, and they prove inadequate when conveying truths of subjects and objects. This is why the painting is titled Ceci n’est pas une pipe (translated as This is Not a Pipe) because even though the image is of a pipe, the artwork is not actually a real pipe.

Magritte intentionally used metaphors, similes, and literal depictions to subvert and transform commonly accepted ideas. In Foucauldian terms, this helped exacerbate
the differences between resemblance and similitude, or representation versus copy.

Foucault explains this further in his book *The Order of Things*:

And the proper name, in this context, is merely an artifice: it gives us a finger to point with, in other words, to pass surreptitiously from the space where one speaks to the space where one looks; in other words, to fold one over the other as if they were equivalents. (Harkness, 1983, p. 9)

Words are merely placeholders for ideas and subjects. They do not do justice for the thing itself. To understand an idea or concept, one must authentically experience the thing itself. Importantly, *This is Not a Pipe* establishes the first major theme in the research, which is how language is a symbolic referent of a lived concept (Harkness, 1983), and even images are incomplete pictures of what they depict.

Harkness (1983) refers to Magritte’s paintings as “visual non sequiturs” (p. 4) because they speak to Magritte’s fascination with the relationship between words and things, and his paintings illustrate false premises. Moreover, Harkness (1983) recounts how in Saussurean linguistics “words do not ‘refer’ to things themselves. Rather, they have meaning as points within the entire system that is a language—a system, further, conceived as a network of graded differences” (p. 5). What he means is that words do not signify the actual thing but are instead arbitrary signifiers that are attached to an idea. Essentially, a word is an historical signifier bound to an object or concept (Harkness, 1983).

Relating this concept back to the study of professional identities of art educators, when a person refers to himself as a teacher, what does the word *teacher* really mean? Is a person a teacher because he attests to being one? Is there a certain representation of a teacher that he or she is attempting to replicate? Where does the idea of *teacher* exist in reality? In sum, how does the word *teacher* signify what a teacher really is or does? In
other words, if a different term, such as grasshopper, were used to replace the term teacher, then the idea of teacher would not change since words are mere signifiers. To call a teacher by another name would not change or better define the concept of teacher identity since words are arbitrary symbols of a thing. Likewise, the word artist or any other professional identity carries the same considerations.

Surrealists point to the actual thing as the primary point of reference, imploring that words are not able to communicate the entirety of a concept such as professional identity. As suggested in the quote by Foucault to properly perceive the reality of a person’s professional identity, it is necessary to find the spaces where the actions, behaviors, routines, habits, and mindsets of the professional identity exist, not just to name and discuss them. In order to understand a person’s professional identity, one must decipher the extent of similarities and differences that exist between the real and unconscious depictions of that person’s experiences of professional identity.

The five art teachers in this study along with the 14 group participants had difficulty naming their professional identities beyond the most obvious ones of teacher and artist. They lacked signifiers to describe the other identities they performed in their work. When participants were directly asked what they would call themselves other than teacher, typically, participants gave one of two responses. They would alternately call themselves facilitator or mentor. Obviously, these are synonyms for the term teacher. If participants were unable to conjure one of these two titles, then they tended to ramble in an effort to define the identity through its characteristics. This was the case for Nicole.

When I asked Nicole what she would be if she were not a teacher, she struggled to assign a name to such a professional identity. She knew that one of her professional
strengths was in observing and relating to students, so instead of providing a signifier for this, she gave an explanation instead:

I’m pretty good at making those connections and building those relationships so it would have to be something in hospitality. It would have to be something where I’m connecting people to people and making them comfortable and safe...So, I would probably move into some sort of hospitality piece. It would be great if it was in a space in some sort of creative field… So, I imagine working with others. Somehow making sure that their needs are met, somehow or another that would be my fifth identity.

Nicole’s response affirms that words are arbitrary placeholders and are not sufficient to describe certain identity concepts that are known or experienced in one’s work. It is possible for there to be professional identities that a person possesses yet there is no structure in linguistics to express it. Therefore, professional identities are misnamed or renamed in an attempt to communicate them through some other form, a copy of the original.

This idea was further illustrated during the group discussion. When participants analyzed each other’s metaphorical representations and interpreted the concept of professional identity, they stated, “It’s complicated” or “It’s complex” altogether circumventing titles since the imagery supplanted verbal expression and documented nuances. While, some of the participants were unsure of their professional identities because this was the first time they had encountered this concept or because they were novice in their teaching career, for the most part, participants sensed other types of professional identities inside themselves, but they struggled to articulate the concept.
Titles for professional identities provide separation, but it does not form an accurate depiction of the thing it symbolizes. Linguistics alone cannot capture the multiple roles and responsibilities of art teachers much like Magritte’s painting is not really a pipe. It is only one aspect of a pipe. Symbols are too structured and confining to allow for the blurriness and blending of what is experienced by individuals. This requires the discussion of another finding, the quality of otherness that is manifested in the space between identifiable professional identities. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault (1983) uses the term *heterotopias*, or places where differences and multiplicities co-exist. The next theme in the data discusses other spaces, the spaces of collective invention and heterotopia.

2. Collective Invention: Hybrids and Heterotopia

![Figure 13. L’Invention Collective (Collective Invention). René Magritte. 1935.](image)

The next theme in the research involves hybridity and heterotopia in professional identity. *Artist* and *teacher* were the only titles that were identical across the research participants, and the other identities listed were dissimilar. Consequently, there is no
limit to the variety of professional identities that an art teacher may perform in his or her work, and as mentioned previously, there is high probability that professional identities intersect and form interstitial identities.

In favor of hybridity, intersectionality, and the manifestation of new creations, Magritte made an observation, “I have found a new potential inherent in things—their ability to gradually become something else. This seems to me to be something quite different from a composite object, since there is no break between the two substances” (Esaak, n.d.). In his painting L’Invention Collective, Magritte demonstrates this realization by merging a fish head with a woman’s lower body. Through this union of joining a fish and a human together, he achieved both a visual trope that toyed with the convention of mermaids as creatures of beauty by reversing the bottom and top halves, and at the same time, he invented an entirely new being. Magritte argued that this was not a composite of objects but an entirely new entity generated from fused parts.

The significance portrayed in L’Invention Collective is that when two objects or identities are combined, it can be disorienting and unfamiliar, and the objects may still be viewed separately. The viewer is remiss to name the whole object, as it has no common signifier. The heteroclite fish-woman is a visual non sequitur; something that does not follow convention, and it resonates as a false reality or imaginary creature for most, yet this object symbolizes its own concept. Surrealists used illogical imagery to challenge dominant ideologies and politics of their time, subsequently trying to liberate society through cultural radicalism and new constructs (Gale, 1997).

The title of the artwork L’Invention Collective, which translates into Collective Invention, refers to parts coming together to invent new dimensions of reality. Hybrid
identity implies uncharted conceptions of self within the liminal spaces that are ambiguous, boundless, and have no fixed order (Harkness, 1983). Hybrid identity is reminiscent of interstitial identities, discussed previously, which emerge in the interstitial spaces, and this surrealist device reflects ideas captured in the literature review regarding intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; McCall, 2005), third space (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejeda, 1999), and poststructuralists conceptions of identity (Zembylas, 2003).

Surrealists describe interstitial space as a place of otherness. When identities link together incongruously and disrupt the order of things, straying away from natural order, then “it is impossible to find a common place beneath them all” (Harkness, 1983, p. 4), and it is impossible to name anything because conventional names no longer apply. This space of otherness was referred to as heterotopia, and it is a term that has value to the research findings and to the Surrealists.

Foucault and Magritte were said to be the cartographers of heterotopia, or this place of disordered otherness (Harkness, 1983). In the book The Order of Things, Foucault defines heterotopia in this way:

Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy syntax in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to but also opposite one another) to “hang together.” (Foucault in Harkness, 1983, p. 4)

Even in forced fusions, images and objects are not necessarily random mixes or remixes, nor are they a metamorphosis of other subjects. Foucault and Magritte suggest that heterotopia is its own space of difference. When things blur together into otherness, there
is no common or familiar way to categorize what it becomes. In a/r/tography, Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong, and Bickel (2008) use the conceptual frameworks of rhizomes and liminality to describe the otherness, which they refer to as the crossovers, interconnections, and interdependencies that occur between things. Heterotopia seems to carry these qualities one step further by taking otherness to a level beyond the notion of interweaving. The Surrealists argue that a heterotopic dimension of being cannot even be named; it is radical and completely disruptive to known realities.

Hybridity and otherness appeared in the findings through the lived experiences of the participants. For instance, after Nancy received her MFA, she taught art history at a community college. Most of the students in her class were not art majors but were pursuing other degrees, and they needed a humanities credit. Nancy recalls:

I felt like I could take all of my hoity-toity art history stuff that I got in college, I felt like I could just make it make sense for nurses, and I loved that, and then I felt like I could do that for elementary school.

In this statement, Nancy speaks to her ability to translate ideas across disciplines. Her community college class functioned as a third space, or heterotopia, because the knowledge was unbound and interchanged between ordinarily unrelated domains. Furthermore, during her interview, Nancy described how she felt while teaching from this interstitial space:

It’s very fluid and intuitive, and I like jumping back and forth between the structure and the intuition. I love that pathway between those two things, and I just love running back and forth, and I like spending time in both places, but I would not want to be in one place only.
Even though Nancy does not explicitly call this boundary crossing, she is indeed portraying hybridity in her professional identity. The act of running back and forth between two parts of her identity implies that there is an altogether new composite identity in existence; in fact, it is such a significant space of her identity that she expressly states that she would not want to reside in only one of her identities. The blending, merging, and converging of her professional identities is essential to how she teaches, thereby supporting the notion that different identities can co-exist and co-create altogether new or hybrid identities.

For Allison, she discussed negotiating her political scientist, artist, social activist, and teacher identities. From the collision of this spectrum, she became an advocate for her students, someone who cared about their autonomy and their ability to self-direct their artistic process. This hybrid professional identity developed when Allison realized she needed to take a stand on behalf of her students:

For a while, when I went into art, I said, “Is this really helping anybody?” And so then, teaching brought it around again because I think that when you make art you are really able to be fully autonomous. Nobody else is going to tell you what you’re doing, so you can own what you’re doing and be independent with it. It is political in that aspect for me, and then really when I was working with underserved kids it really came to light, and giving that gift to them because especially the poorer you are the more people tell you what to do, and that’s not acceptable.

What should a person call this dimension of Allison’s professional identity? Would *teacher-change agent* be appropriate or robust enough to describe how this hybrid
identity is a fusion of teaching, politics, and human rights? The heterotopia in the example might be where Allison fights the reality of the educational system while promoting idealism for more student autonomy and social justice.

Heteropia, or otherness, is a powerful idea regarding the existence of places where there are connections between things that do not belong together and cannot be categorized, and hybridity is what is formed in those places. Heterotopia suggests a new type of nomenclature to situate this phenomenon both in Surrealist literature and as an a/r/tographic rendering. Interstitial spaces and interstitial identities were encountered in the participant data, and it was difficult for participants to describe this phenomenon, a key finding in the data. The painting *L’Invention Collective* provides conceptual support for this finding because it captures how professional identities can be boundaryless as well as fused from the borders of other identities (Irwin et al., 2008). The next theme discusses how hybridity causes paradoxical relationships, something that is also found within spaces of otherness.
3. Empire of Light: Paradoxical Relationships

Figure 14. *L'Empire des Lumieres (Empire of Light)*. René Magritte. Oil on canvas. 1953.

The next theme in the data examines how a teacher may be more than one identity simultaneously, even if those identities seem diametrically opposed. For example, Ingrid explained her professional identity consisted of artist, maid, sink fixer, and critiquer, a list of professional identities that sounds wholly unrelated. Ostensibly, having multiple professional identities inevitably creates paradoxes. Both the group participants and the individual participants spoke about conflicts and contrasts between their professional identities that caused challenges, but, likewise, many also discussed finding balance between their professional identities so that the conflicts were actually complementary. Since a paradox is when contradicting elements exist at the same time, the theme of paradoxical relationships accounts for how participants experienced contrasting identities.
and found plausible harmony between them. As this theme reveals, it is possible for disparate professional identities to reside within one individual and not be problematic.

Paradoxes are a device Surrealists used when they placed two vastly different objects together in strange compositions. A wineglass as large as a mountain in the middle of a field with a cloud resting on its rim, men in suits and bowler hats raining down from the sky, or a wine bottle whose top half is a carrot are a few of the unusual and perplexing combinations seen in Magritte’s paintings. Elder (2013) notes that Surrealists were not the only ones interested in “paradoxical absent presence (and present absence) of objects…techniques used in psychoanalysis (free association, dream analysis, the experience of transference) are methods for uncovering evidence of the operations of the unconscious (absence)” (p. 324). Although one identity may be physically present, there are likely other identities at play in the subconscious; therefore both are present, even if they do not appear to be. The presence of a thing is also a reminder of its counterparts. The irony is that when conscious and unconscious identities combine into hybrid forms, they can embody things that are ordinarily not found together and do not make logical sense.

Paradoxes point to these inconsistencies by calling out assumptions in thinking, and they show how complex the connections between things really are. In his artwork, Magritte never explained why he used visual paradoxes. He preferred the viewer to savor the mystery and remain confounded, “As far as Magritte was concerned, works of art touch on mystery. And this mystery was reality to Magritte—a reality concealed by pallid, superficial manifestations “(Ollinger-Zinke & Leen, 1998, p. 33). Paradoxes
were one of the main ways that Magritte created meanings because by playing with the relationships between opposites he formed new affinities.

The painting in figure 14, *L'Empire des Lumieres*, is a classic example of a paradoxical relationship. Upon first glance, the painting seems innocuous; in fact, it appears to be a perfectly well rendered landscape. After further reflection, conflicting details are noticed, and the viewer is forced to reconcile an impossible situation. While the sky above the house is in broad daylight, the foreground is cast in shadow, barely lit by the streetlamp and the glow of lights from inside the house. In *L'Empire des Lumieres*, Magritte depicted day and night in the same scene, a contradictory circumstance. It can never be both day and night, yet in this image, it is. The paradox of day and night in the same painting reflects the experience of being an artist and a teacher in the same profession.

Aside from the paradox in the painting, there are no other fantastical elements. Without the paradoxical relationship, the image would be considered a technically excellent painting of a house, sky, and trees without any substantial conceptual content. Because of the time discrepancy, the painting becomes mysterious, beckons analysis, and draws the viewer’s attention more deeply into its subtleties. Much like hybrid professional identities, paradoxical relationships are complex; they make it harder to describe what something is or is not, and at times they cause tension or confusion around something that seems straightforward. *L'Empire des Lumieres* is a visual reminder to study objects closely in order to uncover its true meaning, to notice how opposing ideas can find symbiosis and challenge the status quo, and to regard impossibilities with
openness to perceive its transformative potential. The same reminders can be said of hybrid professional identities.

To explore this in the data, the group participants discussed feeling torn between opposing identities and reconciling them into a coherent sense of self. As noted in chapter four, one participant said:

I feel like being an artist and a teacher is almost two opposite things in that way. One is a real solitary endeavor and one is that craziness, and we’re all trying to get to that here, that duality between the two.

This statement clearly reflects how this participant perceives strong differences between her artist and teacher identities. Adding on, another participant commented, “If it [identity] is multifaceted, and it’s out of balance, illness ensues. If any of those elements are out of balance with who you are and what you bring to the table, it’s not a cozy space.” These participants concur that when professional identities are in conflict or experienced as a duality of self, it is problematic and stunts their ability to work.

Conversely, a different group participant voiced that it has taken her years to learn how to allow her identities to balance and support one another since some identities are inherently contradictory. She described her experience this way,

Being okay that, it is what it is, this constant teeter totter of “Yeah, I’m doing pretty good right now, today I’m a good teacher, but not so good of a mom.” Being comfortable with, “This is who I am,” and quite honestly, I’m not really good at all of them all of the time, but I’m becoming more comfortable with who I am as teacher艺术家,and all those other really important things. There’s those layers.
This comment illustrates and reaffirms that paradoxes are part of professional identity, and art teachers must learn how to navigate the conflicts through a process of constant calibration, back and forth, to successfully balance the push and pull of different identities. While multiple identities exist within an individual, certain identities may be in conflict with each other and cause discomfort until the individual figures out how to ascribe to both identities simultaneously and manage a way to unify their opposing parts.

Artist and teacher are two types of professional identities, and for some, they may be experienced as conflicting identities while for others, they may be complementary. Nonetheless, being an artist and being a teacher may be considered one set of paradoxical professional identities that requires delicate balancing in order to manifest the benefits and minimize the tensions of more than one identity at a time. Through the group participant data, there was evidence that balance between identities is critical and it takes time to build and maintain the relationships across them.

An example of a participant who had a high functioning paradoxical relationship in her professional identity was Nancy. When Nancy taught her college art education classes, she navigated between being an artist, a performer, and a teacher at the same time in her classroom. In the following passage, Nancy describes preparing for a class:

So I’ll move the tables a lot of times. I’ll put images and words up on the wall. There’s lots of space on the wall. I’ll use the whiteboard a lot. I have colored markers for that, but it’s never good enough because it’s not my space, and I can never really [pause] I have to take it down. It’s a pop-up space, so that’s really hard. So that would be more of the artist part. I think the teacher part would definitely be the lesson plan. I even have things written down. I don’t just say
“Homework” I say, “Ask students about homework.” I have to really prompt myself because once I’m in the performative mode, I could just lose it. So I have to give myself really, it’s almost like a script, and I also think part of the teaching part is to be really aware of sequence and timing.

Even in how Nancy retells her routine, she jumps back and forth between artist and teacher. The paradox is how her teaching is performance art. She writes lesson plans as an artist with scripts and prompts, but her teacher identity keeps track of timing and sequence. This excerpt shows how Nancy experiences tension between performing and giving instruction. Even though her professional identities inform each other, the identities are also at odds. Somehow, her professional identities have formed a unique relationship, hence, the mystery of the interstitial space.

Artists in particular tend to express contradictions within their identities. When Csikszentmihalyi studied creative people across fields, he noticed “creative people show tendencies of thought and action that in most people are segregated. They contain contradictory extremes; instead of being an ‘individual,’ each of them is a ‘multitude’” (Kaufman, 2014, para. 3). This adds validity that artists, and in turn art teachers, are creative people who can manage a variety of contradictions within their identities, perhaps more so than other individuals.

Restating the opening statement of this section, a teacher can be more than one identity simultaneously. In fact, a teacher can be an artist and a teacher at the same time. Suppose that artist and teacher are contradictory professional identities, yet art teacher has become a socially acceptable form of paradoxical or hybrid identity. It seems that society has already adapted to certain paradoxical relationships in professional identities.
Much like the first glance of L'Empire des Lumieres, it is easy to assume that from the surface, an art teacher is one identity. However, artist and teacher are two distinct professions, and the term art teacher may be a hybrid identity. Surrealist devices cause us to pause and reconsider our realities and truths.

Paradoxes generate conditions that are real and fictional, forcing anomalies to be accepted as possibilities and making things that are clear and categorized into ideas that contain boundless complexities. In the findings, paradoxical relationships appeared as places of inconsistency in professional identity where participants held contradictory viewpoints or behaviors at the same time. The participants described that their professional identities either fit together seamlessly, or conflicted and caused awkwardness. In either case, paradoxical relationships entertain the idea of spaces that allow for the existence of competing conceptions of self. Segueing from paradoxical relationships into the last theme, the next section discusses what happens when a person successfully discovers and crosses the thresholds between similar or dissimilar identities.
4. The Victory: Successfully Crossing One’s Professional Identities

Figure 15. *La Victoire (The Victory)*. René Magritte. Oil on canvas. 1939.

The fourth theme revealed in the findings involves the ability to cross between identities both consciously and unconsciously. This concept stems from the fact that even though a person may have multiple professional identities and those identities may intersect, there is some aspect of intentionality to transitioning successfully between identities. Simply because a person has the potential to move between identities, it does not mean that it happens fluidly or easily. Crossing over is not necessarily automatic or natural. For most of the participants in this research, they described a process or progression of understanding how to bridge their identities, and how to do this in a way that proved beneficial to their practice.

For this theme, the painting *La Victoire* or *The Victory* is used because its poetic content can be interpreted in many ways. The title itself extols victory, as in achievement, but what kind of victory is implied exactly? The painting lacks...
conventional symbolism of victory such as a finish line or a trophy, instead, it contains a
doors camouflaged by a seascape, conveying an unusual meaning of victory.

Since Magritte did not reveal the ideas behind his artwork, for this research, *La Victoire* is interpreted to signify the successful opening of spaces that were once closed, blocked, or hidden from each other. The symbolism of a door implies entering and exiting, opening and closing, and in this image, Magritte painted the door wide open with a cloud suspended between locations. In Surrealism, dream states and dream imagery were popular, so the cloud may represent the conscious opening to the unconscious mind via a throughway. Victory appears to be the result of this successful bridging of realms where connections are finally being realized. The sea is now accessible to the beach and the beach is accessible to the sea. The separation was merely a camouflage that is no longer in tact. Consequently, this analogy can be thought of as doorways between professional identities. One identity is closed from the other until a passageway is discovered.

Dislodging self-perceived or assigned barriers and transitioning across identities is part of the data in the findings. *La Victoire* is an excellent illustration of this idea. The participants spoke about figuring out how to navigate their professional identities, and when and how to use them in their work. For participants who were newer to teaching, they struggled to identify their professional identities and also to find and establish connections between them. They especially found it difficult to integrate their artist identity with their teacher identity. They could not yet see the doorways that connected their artist and teacher identities, and they certainly had not opened it.
While the subject matter of *La Victoire* conveys that potential exists to move across spaces, the title indicates that triumph is achieved once the doorway is opened. Not to say that it is easy to do this. Crossing between professional identities requires finesse, perseverance, and practice, as articulated by the participants. It makes sense that when the individual participants described successful instances of crossing over, those stories were accompanied by feelings of positivity and accomplishment. For instance, Allison recalled crossing from artist to teacher in her previous career as a teaching artist. When she noticed it happening, she described a tremendous sense of fulfillment and satisfaction as if she could be her fullest professional self:

> I felt a little bit like a catalyst in there [the classroom], and that I could really be myself and share that and be inspiring. I could be really authentic and share what was important to me and it was received and expanded upon.

Nicole mirrored Allison’s sentiment. She too sensed a change in her students when she was able to bridge her artist identity into her teacher identity. She referred to this crossing over as her sweet spot, an idea that harkens back to flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Because Nicole’s artistic media is clay, she felt most victorious and at ease as a teacher when she taught in her clay lab. She describes her victory in this way:

> Downstairs in the clay lab, more so than upstairs, I would love to have you see or have you hear how the kids talk while they’re making. I think part of it is just that passion that I have while I’m down there, it really just flows out. Like, “alright, yeah.” Not everyone one of them gets it, but definitely a bigger number than upstairs.
In this statement about her teaching practice, Nicole is connecting her artist and teacher identities simultaneously and allowing them to “flow out”. Additionally, Ingrid leveraged her teacher capacity when she drew upon her painting and drawing expertise and infused it into her students’ projects:

I was one of those kids. I loved drawing and painting. I still do, and it's really fun to be like, “This is how you glaze.” So, I feel like with drawing and painting, I have a lot more tricks up my sleeve that are fun to share with kids that they may not discover on their own.

Ingrid had difficulty identifying her professional identities, but she was able to articulate instances where her teaching felt victorious and why it felt that way. In this excerpt, Ingrid intentionally opened her artist identity to her teacher identity to model new ways of glazing, which was beneficial to her students’ learning experience. These three examples from the data exemplify moments when participants opened doorways between the boundaries of their professional identities and felt successful as a result. The challenge to reach this point was that individual participants had to notice the pathways between their professional identities before being able to connect and cross them in victorious ways.

Doorways as points of connection are dual-directional, thus ideas and identities can influence either side. When the doorways are unlocked and conscious, the teacher enhances the artist, the artist enhances the teacher, and on it goes for any professional identity to which a person ascribes. There are no limits to the number of doorways between identities or how they are accessed. As in the painting, they appear out of thin
air, camouflaged among one’s identity landscape. Until a person is ready to see or open them, the doorways will be unrecognizable.

Victories are not to be underestimated. Of all the themes, victorious crossings stand out as the most meaningful intersectional concept because it signifies what is at stake when professional identities are not effectively open or connected to each other. The participants who could not activate the crossover points felt denied of a level of fulfillment in their work; they were not teaching from their fullest sense of professional ability. However, those who had achieved crossover tended to express greater satisfaction in their work because their identities were inspiring and fueling one other.

Successful crossing of professional identities is the final theme in the data. To reiterate, the four major themes in the research entailed: 1) the misnaming of professional identities since words are not adequate signifiers of the thing itself, 2) hybrid identities that form in spaces of otherness also called heterotopia, 3) paradoxical relationships where a person can be more than one professional identity simultaneously, even if those professional identities appear incongruous, and 4) the existence of doorways between professional identities that allow successful bridging to occur. Given these four themes, there is one final component that underlies them all and that is a developmental evolution. This notion connects back to Kegan’s (1982) theory, but it was also evident in the findings. In order to achieve become awareness of one’s professional identities and understand how to merge, connect, and cross them, there is a developmental progression one must undergo. This is the final thread in the evaluation of the findings, and it is explained in the following section.
Developmental Continuum of Professional Identity and Interstitial Identity

After reviewing the key themes, a major question looms over the data, which is why were some of the professional identities of the individual participants more visible or more present to myself, the researcher, or to the participant? In addition to the research being an inquiry into the intersections of art teachers’ professional identities, this analysis needs to account for the shifting nature of identity, or rather the discontinuities that signal an evolving self (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). It was evident that the individual participants understood and perceived their professional identity differently due to their ability, or inability, to discuss their professional identities. In turn, the developmental stage of each participant affected the findings, and this section provides further interpretation from a developmental viewpoint.

While compiling the interview data, it was apparent that keywords and phrases aligned with Kegan’s developmental stage theory (1982/1994) in accordance with Rodgers and Scott’s (2008) research on how teachers come to understand experiences. The way teachers make sense of their work experiences are different at different stages of their development. As a reminder, Kegan’s theory consists of five stages, however, this research only speaks to stages two through four, as they are the most relevant.

Using the participant data, a developmental continuum on conceptions of professional identity was created (see Figure 16). To reiterate, the purpose of this research was not to assess which developmental stage a participant was experiencing. Rather, Kegan’s (1982) theory merely reflected and supported why the participants reported their experiences in certain ways and why they experienced their conceptions of professional identities differently.
In Figure 16, the titles for each category were borrowed from Kegan’s (1982) theory. The bullet points represent aggregated data and actual phrases from the research. Kegan’s (1994) theory maintains that consciousness evolves and unfolds over time, and that the “ways of organizing experience are not simply replaced as we grow but subsumed into more complex systems of mind” (p. 9). For example, an art teacher in stage two described feeling rigid in her work, but in a few years, she might become more relaxed and fluid thus transitioning into stage three. Typically, most individuals are positioned somewhere between stages three and four (Kegan, 1982). Although participants described qualities that aligned well with stage four, it was difficult to determine if any of them had fully achieved stage four. According to the findings, stage four seemed to appear as instances where participants experienced flow or acted from instinct, but again, these were usually explained as temporary experiences in their work.
Using the stages alongside the data from the individual participants, it adds a layer of clarity to the stories of professional identity. For instance, Allison was a third year art teacher, but she had been an artist for years prior to entering the classroom full-time. She spoke about her experience of becoming an art teacher:

I’m coming in quietly [into my role as an art teacher]. I would imagine if I’m still doing this in five years I’ll probably be fully on, but like, I’m kind of the new kid. And I’m probably kind of crazy for the new kid, but I’ve gotta kind of figure out how it works before I can…you know, I still feel kind of insecure in my position, so I can’t really bust out yet because I need to figure out how it works to figure out how I can in ways that are acceptable because I do want to keep my job but I don’t like to be in a place where there’s a lot of conflict around me.

This passage demonstrates Allison’s insecurity and inexperience in her teacher identity, a description that matches with stage two, but it also shows that she knows she is undergoing a process of growth and needs time to evolve. This is probably due to the fact that she already went through an evolution process with her artist identity.

On the other end of the continuum, Nicole and Nancy appeared to be closer to stage four in their explanations of their professional identity since they commented on being able to crossover and integrate different ways of knowing, doing, and making in their teaching. In the middle of the continuum, Ingrid might be in stage three because even though she had never considered her conception of professional identity, when the idea was brought to her attention, she became fascinated by it. She stated, "I'm not just a teacher and I'm not just an artist, and it is, it's super complicated. It's an interesting thing
to look into. I don't know... " Ingrid was able to perceive the integrations of her professional identities as well as how she had to navigate the tensions between them.

As a reminder, Kegan (1982) noted that few individuals achieve stage five, a place of self-transformation that, if achieved, happens over the age of 40 (Rodgers and Scott, 2008). Stage five, the highest level of consciousness, is where a person can balance multiple ideologies and identities and constantly regard their differences and compare them together from a multi-frame perspective, implying that a person has achieved a height of inter-harmonies. Stage five would be the ultimate interstitial space where professional identities are evenly balanced in a both/and structure and where contradictions and similarities are accepted. To maintain this level of successful identity crossover means that a person has accepted and acknowledged all interdependencies of professional practices, something rare to any profession.

**Developing the Strength to Work in the Interstitial Spaces**

One final point about developmental stages and evolution of identity that came from the research is that it takes practice and strength in order to understand how to work across identities in meaningful ways. This insight came directly from one of the participants who discussed how it was not enough to articulate one’s professional identities or realize in which developmental stage a person was located. She contended that it takes effort to develop strength to work in the interstitial spaces.

Allison told a story that is a beautiful analogy between the processes it takes to learn how to crochet or write and the processes it takes to work in the interstitial spaces of identity. Allison’s explanation began with how she learned to crochet:
The first couple of things you make your hands ache afterwards because there’s so many strange things you’ve never done, but then they just learn how to do it. They build up the muscle, but they also just, like you’re not even aware of the fact that you’re holding your thing. You know? They just work on their own, kind of. And so if you’re, especially trying to make a sculpture, I think, your hands start to have an intelligence. And you see it with kids when they’re learning how to write. A lot of the pre-writing is making sure that your hand is strong enough to be able to hold the pencil to write the word. Bring it down to that level. To learn how to write, you have to have strong enough hands, like who thinks of that?

To crochet, to literally intertwine yarn into complex and intricate webs, one must build strength and muscle memory, and the same can be said of writing, one must build strength before being able to make complex, detailed shapes with a pencil. These steps are essential, and they cannot be skipped.

Likewise, before weaving together professional identities and creating complex webs of practice, one must build understanding of one’s identities and determine how they best fit together. Intersectionality is partially formed from the developmental progression that spans a person’s career, and it is partially formed through practice. Allison’s analogy is a reminder that it takes time to internalize what one’s professional identities are, and also it takes time for identities to become hybrid versions. The development and integration of professional identities requires time, practice, and strength in order to become heterotopic and victorious spaces where flow is experienced.
Significance for Education in General

The study of art teacher professional identity holds significance to the field of education as evidenced by concepts outlined in this chapter around interstitial identity, heterotopias, developmental progressions, and the positive experiences art teachers have when they work from the intersections of their professional identities. The importance of this research lies in the fact that it does two things for the established construct of art teacher identity: (a) It impresses the notion that delineating art teachers as professionals who possess defined competencies and perform specific categories of practice reduces the ability to perceive and account for hybrid and unconscious structures of teaching that may be beneficial and impactful for teaching, and (b) it brings awareness to and questions the traditional role of teacher or art teacher as well as that of professional identity by breaking professional identity into composite parts, many of which are not consistent among people of the same profession, meaning even teachers within the same content area hold differing sets of professional knowledge and abilities. This concepts recognizes that a teacher is more than a teacher, and within that core professional identity are other supporting professional identities that inform how and why a teacher performs her work.

The reason this research on multiple professional identities is significant to the field of education, and perhaps even to other professions, is that it casts a fresh lens on what it means to be a teacher in general and an art teacher more specifically. Too often teachers are expected to do more than just teach; yet their primary label is teacher. Teacher is a misnomer because it inadequately captures the variety of professional capacities that an individual brings to her work and fulfills in a classroom and school
setting. While teacher may be a person’s core professional identity, it was apparent from
the research that when the participants explained their additional professional attributes,
they connected how their epistemologies and interactions across their professional work
shaped the kinds of teacher they were and how and why they developed and taught
lessons.

More specifically to art teachers, a person who is an elementary art teacher
ostensibly is an expert on elementary students, art, and teaching, thus three concepts are
embedded underneath the title teacher. Few scholars pause to examine how these
categories interact or what it means when they overlap. Jagodzinski (2009) posits that
the field of art education needs to move away from art education as a culture of making
and production in order to achieve its higher, transcendental purpose of enabling
transformative and performative action for society. Moreover, Jagodzinski (2009) argues
that to teach art is an act of becoming, not being, which speaks to the interdependent,
translational, and paradoxical philosophies of professional identity. Therefore interstitial
identity is about becoming because it is a space where professional identity convergences
and divergences allow for greater exploration of relationality instead of definition.

For teacher preparation programs and individuals considering entering the
teaching profession, Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) found that pre-service teachers need
a variety of opportunities to engage in dialogues of professional identity in order to help
prepare them for the dynamics and demands of the profession. Research shows that
teacher education programs are often “the first and most important stage in the
development of a student teacher’s professional identity” (Izadinia, 2013, p. 695). It is
believed that the student teaching portion of teacher education is when pre-service
teachers unconsciously adapt to and adopt the cultures, habits, frames of mind, and other sensibilities of teacher-ness, hence leaving their teacher innocence behind (Graham & Phelps, 2002). This research study suggests that more time could be spent in teacher preparation programs as well as in professional development of active classroom teachers asking them to reflect on their professional identities in order to become aware of their unique professional capacities and build on them from the beginning and throughout their careers.

The literature shows that identity is a fluid, ongoing process of development that is constantly being negotiated and changing (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). The additional element this research brings to light is that identities intersect and create interstitial identities in the overlaps. This research supports that when a teacher can perceive and leverage the intersections between her identities, she tends to feel more intuitiveness and flow in her teaching. The merging of a teacher’s professional identities allows passions to connect, which in turn is conveyed to the students, who become more engaged in the material. If teachers could consistently find and teach from these spaces where their professional identities successfully crossed, then their teaching practice would likely be more fulfilling and they would achieve better results from their students.

Lastly, as teacher evaluation and performance systems are being reformed across the country, teacher quality and teaching quality is being scrutinized and standardized to align with national, state, and district systems (Darling-Hammond, 2014). As effective teaching is constructed into clear standards and performance-based assessments, it is worrisome that teacher evaluation will be measured by criteria developed from known
practices with little to no opportunity to include practices that are boundless or that differ from professional standards. The field of education needs to recognize the dynamic nature of teaching, which includes teachers who do not conform to traditional roles and conceptions of teacher. Teaching is an art form, and especially being a teacher of art, it is a reminder that many parts of teaching are not scientifically quantifiable. Not every effective teaching practice or role can be categorized or standardized, and in fact, the field needs to allow hybrid strategies to be an area within teacher evaluations so that innovations can continue to develop.

**Implications and Further Research**

Interstitial spaces are everywhere. People constantly transition from one identity to another or develop from one stage of their career into another. As Irwin (2013) notes, the entanglement of multiple professional identities such as artist, researcher, and teacher form complex systems, or assemblages of objects as discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and these systems lead to new understandings that transform traditional relationships. As teachers progress in the profession, they move into leadership roles as teacher leaders, chairs of departments, administrators, and school leaders. Identifying, understanding, and learning to work in interstitial spaces of professional identities proves promising for the field of education. As teachers grow, so does their ability to connect their identities. Hence, encouraging teachers to acknowledge and integrate their multiple professional identities inspires practices to merge, emerge, and re-merge, which (re)develops alternative conceptions of teacher identity as well as classroom and instructional practices that might otherwise may not be envisioned.

The spaces between teacher professional identities are an untapped source to
discover possibilities in the profession. Reflecting back to the study of art educator identity by Milbrandt and Klein (2008) cited in chapter one (see Table 1), many art educators already distinguish their professional identities into separate categories of work that is subsumed under the title art educator. Likewise, art educators assign values to their professional identities that often conflict with the professional values of their institution, meaning institutions may hire someone due to her esteemed exhibition record, but upon employment, they expect that person to spend the majority of her time teaching rather than making art.

Regardless of how identities are valued or the amount of time they are rationed, there remains the fact that people ascribe to multiple professional identities. When identity categories become unbound, suddenly concepts that lacked words or signifiers can be discussed alongside traditional constructs to push and challenge accepted beliefs and structures around teachers and teaching. Heterotopia and intersectionality, concepts that do not fit neatly into pedagogy, content area expertise, and classroom management (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Beijaard et al., 2000) are critical to consider and apply to the study and development of teachers identity.

Intersectionality within professional identity is something that experts outside of education are already discussing. On March 27, 2015, John Maeda, former president of Rhode Island School of Design, wrote, “Multidisciplinary people are common for #DesignInTech—being “slash” (design/biz/etc) is [emoticon: thumbs up].” Maeda’s statement implies that in betweenness of professional identity is coveted and perceived fondly by other fields. Additionally, Alain de Botton (Raz, 2009) commented that the
famous iconic question of the 21st century is, “What do you do?” because individuals are defined more by their profession than by their lineage. He states:

Our identities are entirely bound up with our work. You can’t really understand someone without understanding what their job is…In other words, there is a real danger of a disconnect between what’s on your business card, and who you are deep inside, and it’s not a disconnect that the world is ready to be patient with. (Raz, 2009)

Hybridity and interstitial identity are important concepts and necessitate further discussion in the literature. In fact, it is forecasted that the future of teaching will require hybrid forms of teachers (Berry, 2011). In his research on the future of teaching in 2030, Berry (2011) comments:

Teachers will develop specialized skills and work in flexible roles that contribute to the education enterprise. We imagine a profession built on the concept of hybridization, with many expert teacher leaders who are specially prepared and paid as change agents, both working with students and playing other roles that advance the learning of their colleagues. (p. 32-33)

Berry (2011) argues for a new kind of teacher, which he calls the teacherpreneur. The teacherpreneur is a teacher who not only stays in the classroom but also leads and develops innovation for the betterment of the field. Teachers with differentiated roles that have both leadership and teaching responsibilities are already happening in schools (Delisio, 2010). It is time for the literature to discuss the emergence of a new kind of teacher, and it is time to bring awareness to the hybridity that is infusing the profession. After all, teaching is a profession that requires many different types of knowledge and expertise in order to collectively meet the needs of diverse learners.

It is also advisable that future research considers what it means for teachers to work in the intersections, the third space, as it will take time for practitioners to adapt to and become accustomed to this way of thinking about their roles and their work. As
Williams (2014) states, “working in the third space involves managing shifting identities, and to recognize and manage the challenges that this brings” (p. 316). Third space and heterotopia is a process of teachers connecting their identities and causing boundary crossing (Babha, 1994), intercategorical relationships, and teaching from spaces that do not have proper names or that are even hidden from view, however, these spaces are critical and inseparable from the learning environment.

In regards to Kegan’s (1982) theory surrounding an evolution of self, Berry (2011) concurs that we should treat teaching as an evolving profession, not a stagnant one. Berry (2011) states, “First, we ask new teachers to do too much with too little preparation, and then we ask too little of them in what should be the second stage of a teaching career” (p. 32). As the profession builds teacher capacity, it will need to restructure and redefine the meaning of teacher identity over the course of one’s career. In the literature, the identified practices of teaching encompass craft knowledge, practical knowledge, personal practical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge (Beijaard, Verloop, Vermunt, 2000), which neglects what happens when teachers have taught for 5, 10, or 15 years. There must be other types of practices that a teacher develops as competency builds and they integrate additional professional capacities into their work. This gap in the literature mitigates and minimizes concomitant forces that contribute to teaching, particularly, the interactions between multiple professional identities of teachers and how these professional identities affect or inform the work of a teacher.

Returning to the initial question of what happens in the interstitial spaces, this is a topic that is ripe for further study. Entering this research, there was an interest on what happens in the interstitial spaces, and it was supposed that novel and unique practices or
pedagogies were formed. However, the findings did not reveal actual practices insomuch as certain feelings and states of mind which consisted of flow, instinct, and authenticity. As a result of these feelings being achieved, it had a positive impact on the participant’s ability to be a strong teacher. Such intersectional spaces, practices, and feelings within teaching and teacher identity need to be explicitly addressed in educational literature.

Future research should continue to investigate the professional identities of educators beyond being an educator as this topic pertains to more than just art teachers. Additionally, social and personal identities such as mother, friend, and neighbor are identities that should also be accounted. Likewise, how do students affect, inform, and shape the professional identity of their teachers? And, does one type of professional identity or interstitial identity have more benefit for the profession than another? For instance, is identity AB better than identity BC in terms of teaching ability? There are many questions to explore as a result of this research.

All teachers can benefit from this kind of identity research. Looking at hybridity and the crossing of known professional identities is where innovative and category-less identities and practices arise. Examining the intersections between professional identities and the consequent teaching practices that lie therein forecasts how teacher roles may change in the future. For this reason, it is necessary to study why multiple professional identities are important to the profession of teaching, especially in regards to how professional identities inform and form the art of teaching. Furthermore, it is necessary to engage teachers in conversations around their perceived professional identities and conduct activities where they analyze their professional identities through verbal, visual, and metaphorical means. It is time to dissect and move away from the traditional teacher
identities society and scholars have assigned to teachers for so long (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Openings and interconnections between teacher professional identities are gravely absent in the literature on teacher identity.

**Closing Comments**

As I typed this final chapter, I happened to hear a radio series titled the *Secret Lives of Teachers*. In the segment, they profiled a physical education teacher of 18 years who had become an award winning beer brewer (Westervelt, 2015). By day, the physical education teacher loved teaching, and by night, he followed his passion project of brewing beer, which also happened to earn income. The reporter stated the physical education teacher “wants to be seen as a teacher with an innovative night job” (Westervelt, 2015). The teacher tried to keep his other identity hidden because he did not want to be perceived negatively by his colleagues or students, but when they did find out, they were congratulatory. This radio series unveils the other professional identities of teachers and how these other identities add value to the work teachers do in the classroom. In general, society fails to recognize the power of multiple professional identities. However, I firmly believe that we are entering an era where teacher identity and professional identity needs to be expanded to embrace otherness.

Towards the start of this research, one of the group participants asked me what I hoped to find. While I had hunches, mostly informed from my personal experience of professional identity, in no certain terms did I pretend to know what the outcomes of this study might be. I truly began this research from a point of curiosity and personal motivation to understand what the phenomenon of multiple professional identities is like for other art teachers.
As I moved through the research process, the more I spoke about my topic with colleagues and friends, the more I realized how worthwhile and applicable it was for other fields. It turns out, the topic of multiple professional identities transcends industries and many people have not paused to consider the various professional identities they employ each day, yet each person accepts the obviousness of this notion. In this study, I did not investigate a foreign idea; instead, I directed attention towards an idea that is so enculturated it is hardly seen. That which lives below the surface, just beneath the musings of daily discourse and popular conversations, is what flavors the structures of our thinking and adds complexity to our experiences. Oftentimes, our perceptions are clouded because we subsume the unique aspects of our experiences to be part of the fabric of greater knowledge. What I did through this study was select a topic that appeared obvious to me, one that underlies many constructs, and by choosing it, I placed multiple professional identities in the forefront of attention.

Artist plus teacher equals art teacher. Art teacher is inherently a hybrid title. Interstitial spaces are not new; in fact, many fields, except education, already have a word for this concept in their vocabulary. For instance, metope is the term for the architectural element that fills the space between two triglyphs in a Doric frieze. Kerning and leading are used in typography to reference the space between characters in a font or lines of type respectively. The term interstitial is used in medicine to describe spaces between body parts, and architecture uses interstitial to describe spaces between structures and architectural elements. Intervals are a way to account for the amount of space between things, and, of course, Surrealists used heteropias to refer to the space between orders of reality. Intersectionality is the closest certain research fields has come to identifying the
between-ness and interdependencies in identity research. Wenger (1998) suggests that identity is a way to transcend “our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves” (Wenger, 1998, p. 176). Therefore, why do we need to call ourselves by a single profession and why do we perpetuate the image of a teacher as only those who teach? Teacher identity has become much more complex and didactic.

For this research, Magritte’s paintings were chosen because they served to disrupt “any dogmatic view of the physical world” and showed “the opposite of what the trained mind is accustomed to expect” (Gablik, 2000, p. 122). Magritte was able to surface the greater possibility inherent in things, the unrealized potential that exists between dissimilar objects. Yet, through the enigma of the improbable, “Magritte presents images of mystery which are as removed from the hypotheses of science as from the approximations of poetry; but they resemble those presented to us by nature every day” (Gablik, 2000, p. 124). Although Magritte painted fantastical compositions, he plucked at the ambivalence contained in the reality.

This study was conducted using a methodology that allowed for the re-imagining of teacher identity and the re-construction of professional spaces. Much like a/r/tography, Surrealism is about dialectical processes of seeing and making the invisible visible through inquiry. As a result, art teacher identity was represented as a concept that involves many professional identities that interpenetrate each other, combine, converge, and coalesce into a single structure that is not often discussed in these terms. Teacher professional identity is complex, and there are not enough signifiers to represent it linguistically or visually. While it may be impossible to know exactly what happens
between intersecting spaces of identity, it can be assumed that relationships are formed and re-formed to constitute new structures of known professional identities.
References


http://arthistory.about.com/od/famous_names/a/Artists-Quotes-Ren-E-Magritte.htm


232


Irwin, R. (November 26, 2013). Personal communication, phone conversation.


234


Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Individual Participants

1. Please tell me about what led you to become a teacher.

2. How do you perceive yourself as a professional?
   a. How do you make sense of your professional identity?
   b. Who are you as a professional? How do you construct yourself?
   c. What are your primary roles?
   d. Would you say you have any sub-identities or hidden professional identities?

3. Do you have any professional identities outside of being a teacher?
   a. Do you have other side professions or past professions?
   b. With what professional organizations are you involved?

4. List or describe all of your professional roles or identities.

5. How do you think your professional identities impact your work?
   a. What special skills do you possess in conjunction with each professional identity?

6. How do others perceive you professionally?
   a. How do your students perceive you as a professional?
   b. How do colleagues/families/ the community perceive you as a professional?
   c. What other roles might they assign to you or perceive you as professionally?

7. How do you perceive other teachers as professionals?
a. Tell me about your colleagues. What professional roles/identities would you assign to them?

b. How do you define the term teacher? What does that mean to you and your colleagues?

8. Do you feel your school or institution encourages or requires multiple identities?
   a. If so, what are they? If not, why not?

9. Describe your typical day before, during, and after work. What are your routines/procedures?
   a. How have you developed your “teaching” practice and habits?
   b. Do you think you have your own way of teaching? What makes it different or unique than other art teachers?

10. Tell me about your classroom environment.
    a. Do you have your own classroom?
    b. What do you attend to most in the physical environment?
    c. Is there anything special or unique about it?

11. Describe a typical classroom lesson. Walk me through it from the beginning to the end. What are you doing and why?

12. What are your intentions for your students or for your teaching?

13. Do your professional identities play a role in your work and/or in your classroom?
    a. If so, why, and if not, why not.

14. If you couldn’t use the term “teacher”, what would you call yourself professionally?

15. What do you find most interesting about your work?
16. What do you find most challenging about your work?

17. If you were to use a metaphor to describe how you think about your practice, what would it be?

18. Do you have anything else you would like to add?
Appendix B: Metaphorical Representations Created by Group Participants

Figure 17. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant.
Figure 18. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant.
Figure 19. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant.
Figure 20. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant.
Figure 21. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant.
Figure 22. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant.
Figure 23. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant.
Figure 24. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant.
Figure 25. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant.
Figure 26. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant.
Figure 27. Metaphorical representation created by a group participant.
### Appendix C: Individual Participant Teaching Artifact

#### Figure 28. Teaching artifact of a rubric created by Nancy Dover.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODERNIST</th>
<th>JESTER</th>
<th>CRAFTSPerson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loves to organize forms, space, and color.</td>
<td>Plays around with ideas and materials with humor and joy.</td>
<td>Revises work with thoughtful love and care.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONNECTOR</th>
<th>ANALYST</th>
<th>STORYTELLER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notices lots of connections between things</td>
<td>Pays close attention to very tiny details</td>
<td>Weaves a story often through her/his projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONJURER</th>
<th>DRAFTSPerson</th>
<th>PLANNER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Takes one thing and radically transforms it into something else</td>
<td>Looks closely at the world and copies what the eye sees on paper</td>
<td>Thinks through a project carefully and creates a plan before starting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPLORER</th>
<th>SHAMAN</th>
<th>COLORIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tries things outside his/her skill level and world view</td>
<td>Comes to the meaning of the art through working with the art materials</td>
<td>Layers color in rich, sophisticated combinations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix D: Table of Surrealist Devices

Compiled from Elder (2013), Gablik (1970), and Orban (1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEVICE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accidental Encounters</td>
<td>“A rock and cloud meet in the sky” (Gablik, 1970, p. 125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alterations</td>
<td>Distortion of original shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in scale, position, or substance</td>
<td>Creation of an incongruity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Bipolarity</td>
<td>Interpenetrating images where two situations are observed from a single viewpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condensation</td>
<td>Occurs from omission, not a faithful translation, but an incomplete, fragmentary version, a sub-system of associated metaphors—fusion of two ideas “anecdotage” (Orban, 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displacement</td>
<td>Image is no way partial, one is substituted for another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubling/Double Image</td>
<td>Multiplication, more than one image or idea repeated, splitting up, or a visual pun “a mountain in the form of a bird” (Gablik, 1970, p. 125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybridization</td>
<td>Two familiar objects are combined to produce a third “bewildering” one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>An object alone or removed from other objects, freed from its expected role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juxtaposition</td>
<td>Incongruous elements placed together, putting things that don’t belong together next to each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metamorphosis</td>
<td>Objects changing from one to another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misnaming objects</td>
<td>Calling an object something different than what it actually is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modification</td>
<td>Some aspect is altered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradox</td>
<td>Intellectual contradictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitutions</td>
<td>Replacing one thing with another</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Kegan’s Framework


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 2: IMPERIAL- The instrumental knower</th>
<th>How does the teacher make sense of social, political, and historical forces?</th>
<th>How does she make sense of her relationship with others?</th>
<th>How does she construct and reconstruct meaning through stories? What meaning does she make of story telling? What are the developmental limitations of the stories she tells?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• She views them as concrete states outside of herself.</td>
<td>• Concrete conception of teacher role.</td>
<td>• External, concrete rendering of experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3: INTERPERSONAL- The socializing knower</th>
<th>• Self is identified with these forces; readily conforms</th>
<th>• Self is defined through relationships</th>
<th>• Able to report on feelings and emotions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 4: INSTITUTIONAL- The self-authoring knower</th>
<th>• Has a perspective on these forces, and the ways in which they shape self</th>
<th>• Clear sense of self; takes responsibility for own feelings as separate from others</th>
<th>• Author of one’s experiences; best able to engage in self-reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>